



Bringing Home the Word

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (B)
August 15, 2021

Mary's Astonishing "Yes"

By Dan Finucane

Imagine someone who knew nothing of Christianity, who had never seen the New Testament, who had never heard the Gospel. Suppose this person hears just one song—the Magnificat, Mary's hymn from the Gospel of Luke. What will that person think?

In some translations of Scripture, Mary says her soul "magnifies" the Lord. She rejoices in God who saves her. Someone who also believes in God will find this appealing and hopeful. But what does it mean that Mary *magnifies* the Lord?

This woman sings about what God does. God blesses those no one else sees.

People who know Someone has created everything might be in awe of this God. Here is Someone with enormous power. The poor fear such power, yet God shows them mercy. Human tyrants abuse power. This God sweeps them away. But how could Mary's life magnify this God, this Lord?

She sings of Abraham. Her God created descendants from a nomad, descendants who later left slavery in Egypt. Moses asked this God, what should we call you? "Call me I AM." No normal name can say what this God is. This God is doing something *new* now, so this woman sings.

How does Mary magnify the Lord? Her life is the window through which we see the image of the eternal God taking our own form. Her heart is a lens through which our eyes focus in wonder as her response, her *yes* to God, receives God's presence. This woman was asked by God to do something extraordinary. She said yes. And with that yes, she is taken up forever in something astonishing. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

Mary is assumed into heaven: small and humble, she is the first to receive the highest glory. She, a human creature, one of us, attains eternity in soul and body. And there she awaits us as a mother waits for her children to come home. Indeed, the people of God invoke her as the Gate of Heaven.

—Solemnity of the Assumption, August 15, 2019



Sunday Readings

Revelation 11:19a, 12:1–6a, 10ab

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet.

1 Corinthians 15:20–27

The last enemy to be destroyed is death, for "he subjected everything under his feet."

Luke 1:39–56

And Mary said..."The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How would you explain the importance of Mary to a non-Christian?
- What might God be asking you to do? Are you willing to say yes to his call?

A Perpetual Reminder

By Fr. Bruce Lewandowski, CSSR

What's wrong with this picture? What if we got it all wrong? As tradition has it, we trust that Mary, as she appears in the icon of Perpetual Help, is always there, ready at any and every moment to help us. But what if, in that very same icon we know so well, Mary is not the one giving help, but is, rather, on the receiving end? What if she's the one who needs help?

Picture Mary this way: like a woman clutching her child looking out the window of a burning building waiting for fire-and-rescue; like a mother grabbing for her son on their front stoop as bullets spray past them; like a mom supporting her hyperactive boy on one arm while balancing bags of groceries from the parish food cupboard on the other; or like a mother and her son on plastic seats behind thick glass waiting for visitors at an immigration detention center.

Think of our iconic Mary in that way. It's a whole different picture—not Mary who helps, but Mary who is in need of help. Our Mother of Perpetual Help appears as a victim of awful circumstances. Mary and Jesus are alone. Joseph has died, leaving a widow and a young son. We know how widows were treated back then. Her son's death looms on the horizon. She is in trouble. With Joseph gone, she is alone in the world and has to rely on the help of others and God. She wants help.

An icon is a window into heaven; this scene can be interpreted as anything but



heavenly. What's wrong with the picture of Our Mother of Perpetual Help? You might say, "Nothing." Well, I think there is something wrong, not with the picture but with how we might view it. Certainly, Mary is the instrument God used to make the Redeemer flesh among us. She is the dispenser of God's graces and blessings.

But if we're not careful, we can treat her as a kind of spiritual vending machine, making it all about us and what we can get from her. Sometimes our thinking about the icon and our devotion to the Lady in it can be one-sided. Our many needs can cause us to turn in on ourselves and forget about others and their need for assistance. Mary is saying:

"Help me!"

When we look into the icon we see Mary. Remember, she also sees us. She looks out her icon-window, waiting, wanting help. She stands as a perpetual reminder of the many women and children in the world waiting for our help. Will you be there, always and at every moment, ready to help? Mary is Perpetual Help for so many in today's world. Perpetual Help is what her icon asks us to be for others. +

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**PRAYER**

*Lord, you reveal the wisdom
of God in the hearts
of all people. Help me
teach others by example
the wisdom of your love,
forgiveness, and peace.*

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

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 16–21

Monday, Weekday:

Jgs 2:11–19 / Mt 19:16–22

Tuesday, Weekday:

Jgs 6:11–24a / Mt 19:23–30

Wednesday, Weekday:

Jgs 9:6–15 / Mt 20:1–16

Thursday, Weekday:

Jgs 11:29–39a / Mt 22:1–14

Friday, St. Bernard:

Ru 1:1, 3–6, 14b–16, 22 / Mt 22:34–40

Saturday, St. Pius X:

Ru 2:1–3, 8–11; 4:13–17 / Mt 23:1–12

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