

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jan 12th 2016

If we look at the “reponsorial psalm” for today, which is actually a selection of verses from the song of Hannah's joy and gratitude for her son, we must be struck by the resemblance of her words to what Mary says in her Magnificat (Luke 1) --- although it is actually Mary's words which hark back to Hannah's.

Luke's use of this indirect citation causes us to compare the two women, and that, I believe, is Luke's intention. The married woman Hannah prayed quite clearly and passionately for a son, and the Lord heard her prayer; in gratitude and praise she surrendered that son to the Lord.

Mary, not really quite married as yet, had no intention of keeping her virginity: that would have been refusing to allow God to control and direct her life. She was so totally open to God, sinlessly so, that she could even equivalently ask Gabriel why he bothered to ask for her acquiescence to God's invitation: God knew her total and complete openness to His will.

She did not have to pray for the Son God gave her; she was ready for whatever He thought was best, and even knowing that there would be sorrow she was clear and outspoken in her gratitude and praise. She did not have to return Him to the Father, to hand Him over to God as Hannah did with her son, but mothered all that was in Him that could humanly turn Him in that direction.

And the words of her Magnificat reveal her to be a creature completely formed by the words of the Old Testament in every good way, filled by the Spirit who inspired those words, a very suitable mother for Jesus, the one whom John would refer to as the very Word of God in its absolute entirety.

Do we wish to be like Mary? Then how much have we read, pondered, studied, and prayed God's word to us?

Chas Kestermeier, S.J.- Creighton University's English Department