

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Dec 20th 2018

The readings for today are so familiar – every year as we prepare for one of the greatest days of our Church year – we are reminded of a very special woman in our Church. Someone who was willing to say, “YES.” A “YES” that would change the world forever, a YES that is greater than any of us could ever hope to say. A faith in God and a willingness to serve Him, beyond anything we could even imagine.

Our first reading, characteristic of our readings for Advent, is from the Old Testament and prophesizes the birth of Jesus, our Messiah, Emmanuel! As our other readings during this Season, the first reading foretells what is to happen and our gospel tells of the story of it happening. Isaiah, seemingly impatient with Ahaz lack of willingness to ask God, proclaims that God will show a sign:

The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel

And as the saying goes, the rest is history. Luke tells the story of the annunciation. It is difficult for me to imagine sitting at my home – doing chores or whatever and suddenly an angel appears. How can one even trust this is an angel . . . and giving me a message from God . . . and asking me to do this unbelievable thing? Wow . . . Mary’s faith is incredible – so pure, so innocent and so willing to please her God and know that everything will be okay. I remember in the 1st grade, being chosen to be the Blessed Virgin Mary in our Christmas pageant. It was a public school but it was back when we actually did pray in school and celebrated Christmas. So, there I was – my mom was very pleased and made sure I had a blue cotton scarf to go over my head. It was so simplistic then, God picked Mary to be the mother of Jesus – she was blessed to be chosen. I didn’t realize at that young age all the implications for Mary (and Joseph). Her faith was unwavering even at a time when she could have been stoned to death. Joseph’s kindness even before being visited by an angel in his dreams indicated what a special man he was and also of incredible faith and love. Together they were a force to be reckoned with – traveling a long distance to comply with the census and delivering a baby in a stable.

When Mary said her “yes,” she couldn’t have imagined the hardships that were to come: the threats to her family from the beginning; a life of raising a son that was never fully hers; the horror of watching your beloved son endure unbelievable torture and death. Yet, Mary will always be the epitome of what women should be. Her grace and humbleness entwined with her strength and faith makes her the perfect role model for women in general and specifically for mothers. I see her as a kind, benevolent soul who knew how to love and someone who is so approachable. I readily pray to her daily and go on my knees to her when I’m concerned about my children or grandchildren. I always feel she understands my fears and hopes for my children and grandchildren. My prayers to her (in addition to the Hail Mary) are often from mothers talking to mothers, seeking guidance and affirmation, searching for justification of my or my children’s actions. I stand in awe of her life and faith wondering if she would still say yes if she knew the ending. I wonder if she realized how this baby Jesus was going to live his life and for how long.

I love the song Mary Did You Know -- it asks the questions that I often think about . I offer you what I consider the most beautiful version of Mary Did You Know by the Pentatonix.

