

Advent 4C: Luke 3:7-18
December 23rd, 2018
St. George's Episcopal Church
Fr. Chris

Mother of God

On the fourth Sunday of Advent we focus on Mary, the mother of Jesus. Actually the whole season is about her response to the calling of God to be God's way into the world. The seasonal color of blue honors her and reminds us of her important role in the visit of God among us.

The mother of Jesus reminds us of what God is doing in the visit of Jesus on earth in the Magnificat, her response to the observations of Elizabeth:

"He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty."

The promise of the coming of God is clear. We are not forgotten. Emanuel. God is with us always. God will strive for Justice and Mercy in our world, and these will ultimately prevail. Keep the faith, no matter how dark things seem to get.

And thinking about Mary reminds me of our mothers. They are all heroes in our lives. Thinking about our own mothers can help us think about what Mary is doing in the birth and life of Jesus. I invite you to close your eyes and think about your own mother for a few moments...

- As you think of your own mother, how well did you know her and about her life? Could you write a biography about her? Or was the focus so on you, that she was too humble to highlight the details of her own life and successes, achievements and disappointments?
- Who is or was she?
- What things does or did she do to let you know she loved you?
- Was she loyal to you? Was she always there for you?
- Was it clear that she wanted the best for you? How so?
- Did she want you to be happy?

- Did she want you to be safe?
- How did she nurture you?
- What memories of your own mother do you have at Christmas?
- How did she reflect God's love to you?
- Did her faith become yours?

When a woman learns that she is pregnant, more things change than just the physical things going on. The focus of a mother changes from herself to the tiny person growing in her womb. That focus will be with her the rest of her days.

Mary was faithful to Jesus all her days. She withstood being shunned in her home community of Nazareth, all the gossip and those who looked down on her for being pregnant out of wedlock. They did not know. They did not understand. They had no faith in God or trust in the young woman whom they knew. Even her betrothed thought about "putting her away" but was visited in a dream by messengers of God that this should not be so.

She escaped to the home country of her cousin Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah and the mother of John the Baptist. We do not know how long she lingered there for respite, but just that she got understanding and support from a woman, and a family who were going through some of the same things she was.

"As soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the babe in my womb leaped for joy." Elizabeth then said, [uttering the famous bullet prayer] "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." These two mothers understood in part what was happening and who was coming.

Mary was always there for Jesus. She made the long journey to Bethlehem, and then on to Egypt to escape the soldiers of Herod. After a sojourn in Egypt of indeterminate length, they returned to Nazareth after Herod died, and they raised Jesus in their faith and home. The Gospels record her presence at times in the ministry of Jesus. They record her sorrow as she stood at the foot of the cross 33 years later, a whole lifetime then. And after the resurrection, holy tradition records that she played an important role in the beginnings of God's new movement: the Church. Today we honor her. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

On his departure from the White House, President Richard Nixon called his mother a saint, perhaps in contrast to the shame he must have felt about himself. He did not want her reputation sullied by his actions, and he must have felt he had disappointed her high hopes and expectations for him.

Funny thing about that... Most mothers could care less about their reputations, and like Mary, are humbled by the miracle of life, humbled to be a mother to a child. Our Mothers rejoice with us when we are successful, and they are always there for us when we fall down and fail. When we fail, they don't stop loving us. Such was the example of Mary: loyal, faithful, loving and true.

Think of your mother this morning. Think of the blessings she gave you in your life. Then think of Mother Mary, as we are also children of hers by Baptism, for without Mary, without her brave, courageous life and her love, we would not be here this morning.

Let me close with these familiar words by Paul McCartney:

“When I find myself in times of trouble
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
And in my hour of darkness
She is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom, let it be...

And when the broken-hearted people
Living in the world agree
There will be an answer, let it be
For though they may be parted
There is still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer, let it be...

And when the night is cloudy
There is still a light that shines on me
Shine on until tomorrow, let it be
I wake up to the sound of music,
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be”
AMEN.