

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, how can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

On November 29<sup>th</sup> we begin our Advent journey. On this journey we have prepared our hearts by slowing down, quieting our souls, and reflecting on what gives us joy inside. On this final Sunday of Advent, we turn our attention to our mother Mary and her conversation with the Angel Gabriel. The angel told Mary that the Lord was with her, that she had found favor with God and that the Holy Spirit will come upon her. Mary did not have a clear picture about what these words would mean to her life, but she trusted in God's messenger.

In the Song "Mary did you know" it asked the questions, Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day heal the blind man, Mary did you know that one day your baby boy would one day walk on water, Mary did you know that one day your baby boy save our sons and daughters.

Mary did not know what the future held for her but she knew who held the future. What great faith it took for Mary to say Yes to something which was so uncertain. Mary trusted that of all woman she was chosen to be the mother of the Son of God.

When Mary said, "Let it be done to me according to your word." She allowed Christ to be born in her.

The great news is that Mary's trust in God, allows us to experience what she experienced; that now at our Baptism, the Lord is with us, that we have found favor with God, that we are His sons and daughters and we are Temples of the Holy Spirit.

When Mary accepting who she was, chosen among all woman, it changed our identity with God. When Mary gave birth to Christ, she also allowed us to be reborn; it open for us a new relationship with God, and the Bible states, we now are a chosen race, a royal priesthood and holy nation, a people set apart for God's own possession. Wow, thank you Mary.

My mother modeled her life after Mary, the mother of Jesus. She prayed the rosary the first things every morning, and the last thing before going to bed. My Mom was woman of tremendous faith who gave birth and raised ten sons. Like Mary, my mom knew she was meant to be a Mother and to bring Christ's presence in the world.

One day while having breakfast at a local diner with some friends, I didn't realize how loud I was talking about my mom who had recently passed away and how she had ten sons. The couple in the booth behind us could not help but hear what I was saying. After I finished talking, the woman in the booth walked over to me and said, "Father, my name is Pat, and I overheard you talking about your mother. She said, twenty-three years ago, I was in the hospital about to give birth to my first child and this lovely, petite woman came into my room to offer me Holy Communion. I remember being so nervous about giving birth for the first time but this woman's presence brought me gentle peace and comfort and she said she had ten sons and one of them was a Priest. I'm curious did you mother ever visit the maternity ward at the Glens Falls hospital. I smiled and said, "Yes she did, she visited and distributed communion to patients for over thirty years."

Pat said to me, “Your mother told me that everything was going to be alright and I trusted her words but more importantly I will always remember her presence.”

A friend of mine, whom I had not seen in years recently told me, “I met your Mom briefly forty years ago but I will always remember feeling Christ presence as she welcomed me into her home.” My mom joyfully brought Christ’s to others because she modeled her life after Mary, the queen of peace.

Mary taught us to trust the message of the angel; that the Lord is with us and that we have found favor with God. We prepare for Christmas this week by bringing Christ’s presence where ever we go by the things we do and the words we say.

We now ask for Mary’s intercession by praying the Hail Mary together. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. May God bless you and keep you, may God’s face shine upon you and be gracious to you always. May Mary our mother holds you in her loving arms. Have a blessed week and Merry Christmas.