



A PERSONAL VISIT WITH MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

Good evening, my name is Mary. It is a privilege to be with you, my sisters in Christ. I am very honored to be invited to your meeting.

I look around and I know that we have much in common. Time, some 2,000 years, separates us, but our lives are forever entwined because of our faith in our Savior. Some of you have had children. I, too, was blessed with a family. Some of you are widowed or have perhaps lost a child. I know the pain you feel. My dear sisters, I know you have heard my story before, but I would like to share with you some of my thoughts personally. Please forgive me if my memory is somewhat hazy at times. My years are advanced, and I am excited and a little nervous. I hope you don't mind that I have brought a few notes with me.

My childhood years were not extraordinary. I learned to sew, cook and clean at my mother's knee. My family worshiped God and I was a happy child. As was our custom, my marriage was arranged to my Joseph. We were considered married from the time of our betrothal. This did not mean we could or would live as husband and wife until the actual ceremony. I was hardly past my childhood years when I was betrothed, and the angel Gabriel appeared to me. I was sitting quietly mending some garments when a bright light shown around me and Gabriel called my name. Even though I remember being terrified of this sudden appearance of an angel, I was also awestruck and did not make a sound. Gabriel called me the highly favored one of the Lord, and announced that I would bear a son to be named Jesus, a royal successor to King David. You can imagine my fear and tribulation as I told Gabriel, "I have no husband!" I will never forget Gabriel's next words. You know them too from our friend, Luke, *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.* My pounding heart quieted immediately and I looked into the bright light and I know my Lord helped me answer, *I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said.* This is not to say that there weren't times when I was scared of what was ahead. You know that feeling, too. We are sisters in Christ, we have shared our concerns and reminded one another of the love of God.

One of my happiest memories of those early days was a visit with my relative, Elizabeth. That is a wonderful story. Luke shared this with you, too. Zechariah and Elizabeth had been married many, many years and were well advanced in age when the Lord sent the angel Gabriel to Zechariah. (Gabriel was a busy angel!) He told Zechariah that Elizabeth would bear a son and give him the name John. John, as you know, was the forerunner for the Lord and was filled with the Holy Spirit as he was preparing the people for Jesus' coming. I

remember my first visit with Elizabeth after Gabriel had appeared before me. How joyful she was. She continually praised the Lord that he had favored her to bear a child in her old age. Elizabeth was six months with child, and she told me that when we greeted one another the baby leaped for joy in her womb. This special time with Elizabeth, about three months, just reinforced that the Lord had blessed me, undeserving though I was. The Lord put peace in my heart and told me that God was now helping “his servant Israel,” since he had “scattered the proud” and “put down the mighty,” while he “exalted those of low degree.” The words I spoke to Elizabeth have come to be known as the Magnificat. Perhaps, if you are not rushed, we can share those words before we depart from one another.

Joseph soon learned that I was with child and considered divorcing me to spare me from public disgrace. My heart ached for my husband and for his relatives. To be with child before the legal marriage ceremony brought a terrible shame to a family in my time. Again, our Lord intervened and sent His angel to let Joseph know that my conception was “of the Holy Spirit.” At that time the census issued by Caesar Augustus was to be taken for the entire Roman world. This meant that my husband and I must travel to Bethlehem. This was a long and hard trip for both of us, at least three, maybe it was four days. I worried about the child as I rode on the donkey. Of course, I worried about Joseph who was so tired and trying to get us all safely to our destination. *(Sigh)* Yes, it seems strange now that I should have “worried” about anything. But, I was just a young woman, about to give birth under the strangest of circumstances. Did I not trust what God had foretold? I know all of you understand when I say that mothers have an inborn knack to think about all the things that could and might happen! You know the Lord is with you every single second, yet you pick up that “thread” of worry that sometimes becomes as heavy as a rope holding an anchor.

My Joseph and I reached Bethlehem at last and hurried to find some living quarters as my labor pains were beginning and I was so very, very weary. We went from inn to inn and because of the census nothing was available. We would have settled for anything! The Lord found a place for us. I know now that it was where we were to be from the beginning, but at the time it was hard to see that through the tears, birthing pain and bone-weary exhaustion that assailed me.

It truly humbles me to remember the birth of Jesus, my son and Savior! Joseph took us to a small stable where I could hear and smell the animals all around us. Many of you remember the birth of your children. You know how quickly you forget the trials of giving birth and how beautiful that child is! Our son was a beautiful baby. We wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in the feeding trough of the animals. Jesus’ birth was announced to shepherds who had flocks of sheep in the nearby fields. They came to the stable with their hearts filled with wonder as they told us about the wonderful appearance of Gabriel who told them, *Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.* The angel told them to

go and find the Christ wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger. And then if that wasn't enough to get their attention, God sent a host of angels praising God and saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests*. You know the peace promised by God proclaimed by His angels that night - that deep peace of mind and soul for those who confess Jesus as Savior, peace that comes only from God.

Even Magi, you might call them astrologers today, came to bow down and worship Jesus. King Herod had heard that the Magi had seen a brilliant star in the east and were on their way to worship Him. He secretly summoned the Magi and found out the exact time the star had appeared and sent them to make a careful search for our son. He lied and told them that he, too, wanted to worship Jesus. They brought wonderful treasures of gold, incense and myrrh, but were warned in a dream not to return to Herod. They quickly fled to their own country. Again, I as a mother, can truly rejoice at the wonderful planning of God. Shepherds and Magi, the lowly and the highest came to worship Him.

An angel of the Lord came to my Joseph in a dream and told him to take Jesus and me and escape to Egypt as Herod was searching for Jesus and would kill Him if found. We fled, and you know the sad massacre that took place in Bethlehem and surrounding vicinity as Herod ordered all the boys two years old and under killed. Oh, how my heart ached for those parents.

Well, I must go on with my story. We eventually returned to Nazareth where Joseph worked as a carpenter. I get so excited when I have an opportunity to share with my sisters in Christ that Jesus was an ordinary boy in so many ways! He played, laughed, cried and grew like a weed. I hope you don't mind me saying this about the Savior, but you see He was human, too. I know now that Jesus was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was with Him. However, I didn't always see this when He was a young boy.

Oh, I must tell you about the time we went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. As always, the crowd was immense and we expected our children to stay close to us. After the Feast was over, we began our journey home. We were tired and had traveled at least a day when we discovered Jesus was not with us. I had thought that He was with Joseph, and he thought I knew where our son was. We weren't real happy with one another that day! You know what I mean, don't you? You say to your husband, "Well, I thought you had Him," and he says to you, "No, you're supposed to be looking out for Him. I have too many other duties to attend to." Well, there was nothing to do but turn around and go back to Jerusalem. At first I was terrified that something bad had happened to Jesus. My heart raced as we traveled back. Then someone in the city said that He was sitting in the temple courts among the teachers listening and asking them questions. Well, once I knew He was all right, I got angry, and when we found Him I told Him I was upset and what we had gone through worrying about Him. Jesus just looked at me with those eyes, shook His head like I WAS

THE CHILD, and said, *Why were you searching for me? Did you know I had to be in my Father's house?* Believe me, it was not one of our better moments and we headed for home. Joseph and I didn't fully understand until sometime later. But, I treasured all these things in my heart and watched Jesus grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Elizabeth's son, John, grew into adulthood and began preaching the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as written in the book of Isaiah. He baptized many and some even began to wonder if he might be the Christ. Elizabeth worried about him, but she knew in her heart that he was fulfilling God's prophecy as he told the crowds, *I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come...and baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*

Have you heard about the baptism of Jesus? Oh, what a beautiful sight that was. At first John did not want to baptize Jesus because he felt so unworthy, but Jesus told him he must to fulfill all righteousness. As Jesus was baptized, the sky opened and we saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. A beautiful voice from heaven proclaimed, *This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.* My heart was overflowing.

For some time after Jesus returned to Galilee, He taught in the synagogues where everyone knew and praised Him. It was a good time for Him and for me as I saw the wonderful way He was with others. Yes, that was a good time in our lives, perhaps one of the best. Then He went to Nazareth, where we had raised Him, and began teaching in the synagogue. He told them that Scripture was being fulfilled right before their eyes. They turned on Jesus because He claimed to be the Messiah.

He then went to Capernaum where He drove out a demon of a man possessed. I was sometimes so frightened for Him, because the devil has such power. I needn't have been. I know that now. He continued to heal the sick and preach the Good News of the kingdom of God. There were times when He looked so gaunt and I knew He was weary. As a mother, I just wanted Him to come home and rest. I asked Him to but, of course, He couldn't. He chose His disciples to come and share the Good News and He shared His words of wisdom with them. They traveled miles with Him and became good friends. Like so many, they didn't fully understand.

Oh, I must tell you about that time on the Sea of Galilee! John told me about this. A great crowd had gathered because they had heard of the many miracles He was performing. As Jesus saw the crowd coming toward Him, He asked Philip how they would feed them. He, of course, already knew, but He was testing. Philip told Him that eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have one bite. My son told Philip and Andrew to have the people sit down. They told me there must have been at least 5,000 people. Jesus took five barley loaves and two fish, gave thanks and began to distribute it to those who were

seated. What a great miracle that was. When all the people were filled there was enough left to fill 12 baskets.

I know you are anxious to hear about the wedding at Cana in Galilee. Jesus was there with the disciples and I had been invited, too. It was a beautiful wedding with all the best wine flowing freely. Then I heard that they had run out of wine. This was a disaster for the family, as they were obligated to provide as long as the feast lasted. Sometimes this was several days. So when I heard about their embarrassment, I went to Jesus and told Him what had happened. Then I was a little embarrassed because He told me not to involve Him. His time had not yet come. But I knew in my heart that He would help. I could always tell by the tender way He looked at me, and I told the servants to do whatever He told them. Of course, you know they filled six stone water jars with water, right to the brim. Then He had them draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet. When the master tasted the water, it had been turned to wine. I don't have to tell you that I was probably too proud for my own good that day!

There are so many wonderful stories we could share this evening, but it is getting late and I want to tell you about the last time I saw Jesus. Betrayed by Judas, captured and taken before the chief priests and then handed over to Pilate, He was traded for the release of Barabbas. See, my hand shakes as I remember the events leading up to the crucifixion. I was there and I saw Him pass by robed in a purple robe and a crown of thorns sticking in His head. I saw them spit on Him and strike Him time and time again. To see Him like this and hear them mock Him, crying out, "Hail, king of the Jews!" was almost more than I could bear. My heart was pounding as though it would come through my breast, but I continued along the same path with the crowd crushing in around me. What else could I do? I had to be near Him! Every time the hammer hit the nails I thought I would faint. They screamed and cursed at Him, and I wanted to run to Him and hold Him one more time. I looked up and He was looking directly at me. Our dear friend John, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were with me. Jesus looked so tenderly at me and then to John and whispered, "Dear woman, here is your son." Then he said to John, "Here is your mother." John put his arm around me and held me up, and my dear friends gathered around. What would I have done without them. Finally at the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land and at the ninth hour He cried for help, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" His last words were, "It is finished." I felt my life, too, was over.

His body was taken away by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and tenderly wrapped with spices, in strips of linen. He was laid in a new tomb. We were inconsolable in our grief. But on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came running, laughing and crying at the same time with the most wonderful news. "What is it?" I asked. "What has happened now?" "Oh, Mary," she said, "Jesus lives! I have seen him!" Joy? Hope? Love? So many words and yet no perfect one to describe what was in this mother's heart. He lives! Oh, indeed He lives!

My dear sisters in Christ, He lives for you and for all the world. He died that we might live! He rose again that we might have life everlasting. Maybe if we get together again we can talk about Martha and Mary, Lazarus, Peter, and so many others. I hope I've given you a personal glimpse into my life and heart. Let's read the Magnificat together from Luke 1:46-55.

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