

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

4th Sunday of Advent | For Sunday, December 19, 2021

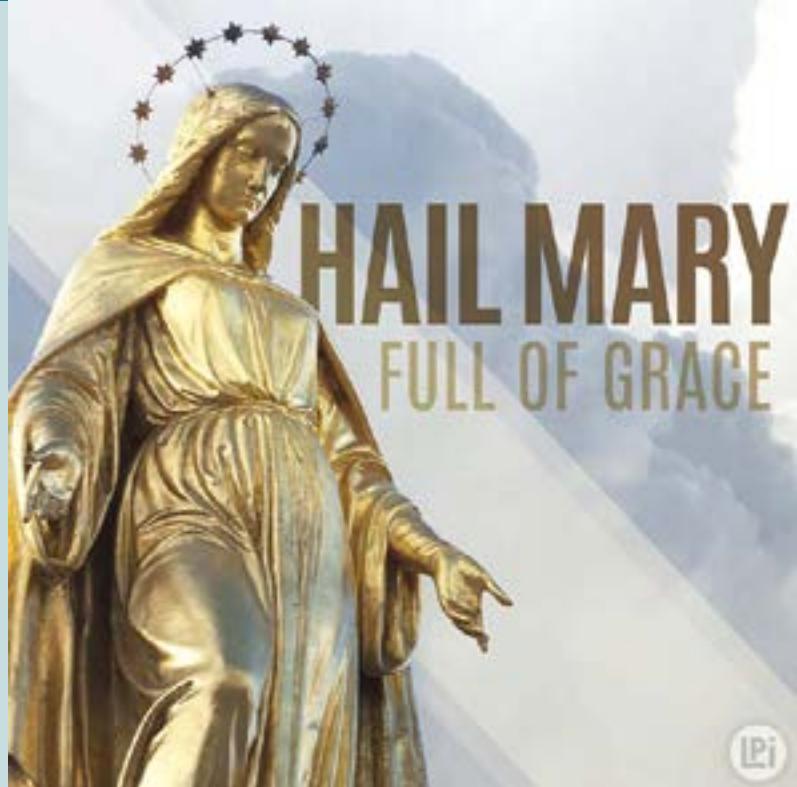
Mary, Jesus Expert

Written by Allison Gingras

Micah 5:1-4a

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45



In the 1970s, if someone wanted to increase their tennis prowess, they would watch Chris Evert Lloyd's moves on the court. For the millions of little girls with the iconic 'Dorothy Hamill' pixie and dreams of being an Olympic skater, it was all about finding every opportunity to see Dorothy Hamill perform the Hamill Camel. If you were looking to improve your pitching, you'd study Tom Seaver, Steve Carlton, or Jim Palmer. What drew people to them? They were experts. They had reached a goal most could only dream of achieving, so if you wanted to get there as well, it made only sense to turn to role models of success.

So, it stands to reason if we long to uncover the path, learn the wisdom, and acquire the disposition of heart required to follow Jesus, we have but to look to one expert — Mary, his mother. By contemplating her principle virtues, actions, and devotion, we can reach unparalleled heights of faith.

Courage

There is no courage without fear. True courage is persevering with the task before you in the face of your trepidation. Mary, filled with grace, faced with many circumstances we may consider fearful — having to tell your betrothed about your pregnancy, escaping from a King determined to slay your newborn son, and being present at the foot of the Cross. Yet, her faith was unwavering. Mary teaches us courage in the trials of life. Where do you need Mary to guide you to be heroic?

Compassion

Mary had just received the most incredible news of her life, really in the history of the world, yet she didn't sit around in shock or contemplating the privilege of being chosen the Mother of God, nor did she head to the town well to spread her good news. Mary, upon hearing her kinswoman Elizabeth is with child, goes in haste to assist her.

Compassion — the care and concern for another. The ability to recognize a need and respond without hesitation brings forth grace upon grace, as witnessed with Elizabeth's greeting when Mary entered the house. "Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Humble and pure of heart, Mary's love for others is present throughout scripture.

We'll see Mary's compassion exhibited again at Cana when Mary comes to the aid of the bride and groom and unselfishly relinquishes her private life with Jesus, while imparting one of her greatest lessons, "Do whatever He tells you." Will you allow Mary to reveal where your assistance is needed and, more importantly, how to respond with haste?

Trust

One minute you are looking at cute dresses for Easter; the next, your daughter is nowhere to be seen. Luckily, this feeling of panic lasts only a few seconds for most of us when the child emerges from the clothing rack right next to us. But for Mary the horror of searching for her missing son lasted three days. Throughout those hours of travel and seeking for the child, Jesus, she put her hope in God. Although anxious, knowing with her whole heart, God is always in control and works all things for good, Mary surely experienced the peace that comes from trusting God.

Perhaps, in her many prayers those three days, Mary called upon today's Psalm as a prayer, which in her situation would have an all the more profound meaning, "Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong." Jesus is always found when we seek him, especially in our prayers. In what current situations can you put your hope in God and trust like Mary?

Mary's expertise showed in how she lived out better than anyone the words spoken in Luke's Gospel, "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Allison Gingras

PRAYER

Hail Mary, Full of Grace,
as the Lord is with you,
may I learn how
to keep Him ever close to me
by your witness.

Blessed are you for believing;
please guide me to discover
the fulfillment of this kind of faith.