

Encouragement Encouragement

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Miriam, Mary. Daughter, Virgin, Wife, Mother, Guide and Queen.

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May and October are more generally associated with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Mainly this is because of the several feasts that occur and the traditions associated with Marian processions.

Yet in some ways this does not do credit to the woman who simply said 'yes' to the Lord's request. Her greatness lies not on being chosen but in that 'Fiat', her unconditional agreement, that so many of us find so troublesome. Looking more closely at the calendar there are few months in which a Marian feast does not occur. But the feasts in September are worth pondering over as they tell us much about the valour and uniqueness of the woman and her role in the work of salvation that we are all bidden to participate in.

At the start of September (8th) we have Mary's birthday. Apart from Jesus, we do not celebrate a birthday of any Saint, unless perchance their feast falls on that day. Yet we feel that it is important to single this one out. It is a timely reminder to recall that she was an ordinary person born during a Roman occupation, who had parents and family and who had the everyday issues of growing up in a difficult time. Although not mentioned in the Gospels, by tradition we remember Anna and Joachim as her parents and by the same tradition we believe that she was dedicated to the Temple at an early age where she would have been well instructed in teachings in the Torah, Scripture, and to observe all the rituals of her Jewish faith. How clearly we learn this when later her life takes her on that mysterious and holy journey to stand at the foot of the Cross. She was a daughter and obedient to her parents and schooled to be so. We tend to forget the ordinary titles of Mary.

We know much about her call to be the Mother of God from Scripture but this call to be a mother and being a wife to Joseph is often shrouded in the inexplicable and heroic call to surrender without realizing the way that she would have to take on board so much which would have been alien to her and risked not only ridicule but also rejection possibly even by her own parents and



being shunned by others. Purity was much valued in a young wife to be. Nor can we underestimate St Joseph's courage and generosity of heart at this point. What journey they both embarked upon and for a young woman, many trials and tribulations awaited. Going to Bethlehem was no short journey and pregnant with Jesus, the fleeing to Egypt and settling as a refugee there, no easy task, and finally returning to Nazareth to bring up her Child. Nazareth in fact was not upheld as an important place but one almost of ridicule...

During her pregnancy we see another aspect of her courage. As we see in Luke's Gospel (1:36-45) account, Mary having discovered that Elizabeth was

expecting a baby *too*, as the Angel had told her, set off to visit, and help her much older cousin. She was pregnant herself and yet she was not put off by the journey, a fair distance, or going alone not an easy task on foot or donkey. There were many dangers. The remarkable faith of her cousin was revealed as she greeted Mary with the famous word of great faith 'Why should this great thing happen to me that the mother of My Lord should come to visit me?' What Joy the women felt so much that their children within them leaped for Joy. But Mary's selflessness and humility was shown by her response. It is worth pondering this response because it actually tells us more than we think.

Known as the 'Magnificat,' a song of praise, it is a direct echo of a prayer of Hannah. Mary would be well versed in Scripture and probably the stories which abound. Hannah herself childless, and desperate to have a child pleads with the Lord so strongly that the Priest thinks that she is drunk as her lips are moving but no words. Undaunted she persists and her prayers are answered. She has a son called Samuel who in gratitude she dedicates to the temple through the same priest, Eli (Samuel 1 21 through to Ch. 2) Samuel becomes a leader. Now Mary's song bears great resemblance to Hannah's. Indeed both women in different ways sacrifice their Sons to the Lord.

"Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did." St. Maximilian Kolbe

In so many ways Our Lady exhibits the characteristics of many women and in that she is a rôle model that rather than being distant and extraordinary and unreachable, she manifests all the attribute of womanhood at its best. She was indeed ordinary in an extraordinary way.

We know that she taught and cared for Jesus and that there are references of her looking for him both in the Temple when lost (how many mothers have had that experience if only for a few second where their charge seems to have disappeared with the ensuing panic.) She encouraged Him at start of His Ministry in Cana. She also goes looking for Him, probably missing Him during his years of Ministry... but we see her again later at the foot of the Cross. The 14th of September is the feast of The Triumph of the Cross which is no small way is also a feast of Mary. The culmination of her sacrifice is seen as she stands in agony seeing her son going through His agony and torment. Every mother weeps for a child that is hurting, ill, injured and shares that pain that only a mother knows. She stood with the other women and saw Him die and never wavered. The men of course, had deserted Jesus, except for faithful John. Her son's death was also her ultimate triumph as He rose and became the victor over death. Her faith and commitment makes her the Mother of all mothers and Mother to all.

The next day we celebrate this as she is respected as the Mother of Sorrows. Not only did she stand beneath that cross but she walked with Him throughout His life and as he carried His Cross.

We also know that she was with the Apostles and Disciples at Pentecost and was probably helping them come to terms with so much. 'They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus' (Acts 1: 14). We know too that she was widowed and that St John looked after her in her old age. What else can we say that illustrated her 'Wonderful ordinary- ness'.

It is for this reason that she is a wonderful intercessor on our behalf as she has experienced many, and more of Life's many incidents. But there is something very important that has to be highlighted. Jesus came to redeem us and save us out of the sin that was the legacy of the disobedience of Adam. As the hymn says 'A second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came'

Mary however was the 'Second Eve' her purity and goodness and obedience points to a better way of

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living. Many that preceded them pointed to their coming...

Is it any wonder that the Angel greeted her with the words 'Hail Mary', a salutation of note. At the feast of the Assumption last month, the 'special pastor' ended his homily with the Hail Mary, a fitting way for us all to remember her with that prayer and in thanksgiving for her role in guiding us to Jesus... Halina Holman

Pope Francis

'Today it would be good to stop a moment and think about Our Lady's pain and sorrows. She is our Mother. And how she bore them. how she bore them well. with strength. with tears: they were not false tears. it was truly a heart destroyed with sorrow. It would be good to stop a moment and say to Our Lady: "Thank You for accepting to be Mother when the Angel said it to You and thank You for accepting to be Mother when Jesus said it to You. Honour Our Lady and say: "This is my Mother". because she is a Mother. And this is the title she received from Jesus. right there. at the moment of the Cross 'Your children, you are Mother'.

Rome 2020



**'O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came'.**

St. John Henry Newman

Feast Days in September

3rd St. Gregory the Great

5th **Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

8th **Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

9th St. Peter Claver

12th **Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

13th St. John Chrysostom

14th **The Exaltation of the Holy Cross**

15th **Our Lady of Sorrows**

16th Ss. Cornelius & Cyprian

17th St. Robert Bellarmine

19th **Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

21st The Martyrs of Korea

21st **St. Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist**

23rd St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina

24th **Our Lady of Walsingham**

26th **Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

27th St. Vincent de Paul

28th Ss. Laurence Ruiz and co. & St. Wenceslaus

29th **Ss. Michael, Gabriel & Raphael, Archangels**

30th St. Jerome

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