

## Mary for the Third Millennium - Part 8 of 8 - The Joy of the Gospel

### And in Conclusion

When Pope Francis came to the conclusion of his 2013 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, he turned to the Mary as mother of evangelisation. In her presence with the disciples in the upper room (Acts 1:14), praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the pope sees the beginning of the great mission to bring the message of Jesus to the nations of the world. Her presence in the new work of evangelisation called for in our times, her role as Mother of the Church, is vital to missionary success.

### Jesus' Gift to his People

The cross is the place in which human sin and God's mercy, meet. The presence of the Mother and Beloved Disciple were there as consoling presences for Jesus. At the foot of the cross stood the little community of female and male; blood and water flowed - Baptism and Eucharist there in symbols; the Church is born in blood and water. Only after giving his Mother into this little community of Church does Jesus give over his Spirit. We recognise Pentecost in its historical perspective in Luke, but in John, this moment is Pentecost.

Jesus did not want the Church and its members to journey through history without the presence of his and our Mother. At this new hour of creation 'the Lord did not want to leave the Church without this icon of womanhood, Mary, who brought him into the world.' Jesus, in his dying moments, gives her to 'the rest of her offspring' (Revelation 12:17). A close connection exists between Mary, the Church, and each member of the faithful, based on the fact that each one in their own way brings forth Christ. That is the challenge for each one of us... 'and the Mother of Jesus is there' (John 2:1).

*Evangelii Gaudium* reflects the concern of Pope Francis for the poor. He concludes with the woman who praises God for looking down on her own poverty and lowliness (Lk 1:48). Mary turned a stable into a home that welcomed Jesus and wrapped him in poor swaddling clothes - and her own great love. She is concerned that the wine of God's good news in Jesus be not lacking in our lives. She understands our pain because her heart was pierced by a sword (Luke 2:35). The heart of our Mother aches for victims of injustice in all its demeaning shapes and forms.

Every baptised child becomes a child of Mary who accompanies us on our faith journey, opening us to the message and presence of her Son. She shares our struggles, walks at our side, and surrounds us with God's love. The beautiful words to Juan Diego by Our Lady of Guadalupe echo her encouragement, "Let your heart not be troubled...Am I not here, who am your Mother?"

### Star of the new Evangelisation

A call has gone out worldwide for a new evangelisation. The life of Mary is an example of an exceptional pilgrimage of one who lives and grows in faith. She let herself be guided by the Holy Spirit on a journey towards fruitful service. Today we call on her to help us proclaim the message of salvation to all and enable new bearers of the Gospel to come about. The journey is not an easy one; there are times of aridity, darkness, even fatigue. These are all aspects of the human life and journey of Mary herself, especially in the years of the hidden

childhood in Nazareth. The mystery of her Son as he grew and her own pilgrimage of faith accompany each other.

### **Mary, Model for Evangelisation**

Evangelise in the style of Mary with love and tenderness for these are revolutionary aspects of mission. They are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who do not need to treat others in such a way as to feel important themselves. The revolutionary aspects of Mary's prayer (Luke 1:52-53) praise a God who 'brought down the mighty from their thrones' and "sent the rich away empty." Mary, woman of prayer and work in Nazareth, recognises traces of God's Spirit in the great and small events of life, contemplating in her heart the mystery of God at work in the world.

Mary is also Our Lady of Help as she hastens to be of service to others (Luke 1:39). Mary, as woman of justice and tenderness, of contemplation and concern for others, is our model of evangelisation. We pray that our Church may become a home for many people, a mother for all, and a new birth for a new world in accordance with the promise of her Son: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). With Mary we move to the realisation of that promise and pray to her:

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,  
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,  
welcomed the word of life  
in the depths of your humble faith:  
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,  
help us to say our own "yes"  
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,  
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.  
Filled with Christ's presence,  
you brought joy to John the Baptist,  
making him exult in the womb of his mother.  
Brimming over with joy,  
you sang of the great things done by God.  
Standing at the foot of the cross  
with unyielding faith,  
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,  
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit  
that the evangelizing Church might be born.  
Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,  
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life  
which triumphs over death.  
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,  
that the gift of unfading beauty  
may reach every man and woman.  
Virgin of listening and contemplation,  
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,  
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,*

*that she may never be closed in on herself  
or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom.  
Star of the new evangelization,  
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,  
service, ardent and generous faith,  
justice and love of the poor,  
that the joy of the Gospel  
may reach to the ends of the earth,  
illuminating even the fringes of our world.  
Mother of the living Gospel,  
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,  
pray for us.  
Amen. Alleluia!*

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