

## **MARY, MOTHER OF GOD**

### **JANUARY 1, 2012**

Mary, Mother of God. There are so many images of Mary! Do Christmas cards give us the real image? As I opened each card I received, I reacted: NO! She is so much MORE!!! The front hallway in the Motherhouse beautifully displays images of Mary from various times, traditions and cultures. Each image expresses some aspect of this woman we honor as Mother of God today. And she is so much MORE!

As you think of Mary, or hear the Scriptures read, what image comes to you? Who is she for you? (Pause)

Today's Gospel gives us a glimpse of Mary...pondering and treasuring her experience. Let's look and listen more closely.

Mary is a young Jewish woman faithful to her tradition, a very ordinary young woman whose life has been interrupted by a very startling encounter with an "angel" (really? what really happened?). She receives disturbing news to which she responds with a question: How can this be? She is told that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her. What does that mean? She says "YES", accepting deep within. Her tradition is clear: GOD is faithful to His promises. "I will be with you" - Spirit will overshadow you.

Mary needs to tell Joseph to whom she is engaged but not yet living together. How will she tell him? What will his reaction be? Joseph is respectful, honest and loving. What next? He has so many questions! His questions are calmed by his own dream...yes, he will be faithful to Mary and to the movement of God so far beyond understanding!

Mary spends time with Elizabeth who is experiencing her own surprising pregnancy. Both women are in touch with LIFE mysteriously moving deeply within. They come to believe and trust that nothing is impossible with God!!! Their presence to each other is reassuring.

When Mary is very pregnant, she and Joseph are required to travel to Bethlehem to be counted! The baby is due very soon. How can this be? Where will they stay? How will they manage? Trusting in deep faith, they know they will find their next steps.

Their days unfold with strange occurrences: shepherds and nobility of other countries show up. They are guided from deep within. Mary and Joseph take their eight day old baby for circumcision and naming. YES - He is to be called Jesus. Forty days later when they present Jesus in the Temple, Mary hears that “your own soul a sword will pierce.”

*These are not Christmas card images of Mary, her husband and newborn!*

What carries Mary through all this strangeness? Joseph is at her side, yes, and her experience of God’s own Spirit overshadowing her carries her. She treasures all these moments of surprise, of light and insight, of deep knowing, pondering often what is beyond her understanding. In the midst of confusion...How can this be? She grows in trusting, relying deeply on GOD, within her and beyond her! She seeks LIGHT in darkness.

No, the truth, beauty and deep wisdom of Mary, Mother of God, is not captured in any Christmas card image! Sister Kathy Garcia’s sketch of the Jewish Mom and Child comes closest for me! Holding her child in love and living into the unknown as He matures and makes risky decisions, Mary must hold onto her deep trust, pondering always what God’s Spirit whispers deep within her...gradually discovering when to hold on and when to let go...what to carry and what to surrender in love.

Listen, as today Mary, Mother of God, whispers her wisdom in the depths of our hearts:

From our first reading:

“The Lord bless you and keep you!

The Lord let His face shine upon you and be gracious to you!

The Lord look upon you kindly and give you PEACE!” (NM. 6)

And from our second reading:

“May God’s own Spirit continue to cry out in your hearts - “ABBA!”

(Gal.4)

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May we continue to face into all the unknowns 2012 will present.

May we confidently ask: How can this be? -- believing that wisdom will be given us.

May we ponder the whisperings of God's Spirit in the depth of our hearts.

May we be peacemakers, believing that truly, "Nothing is impossible with God."

I invite you to take a few moments and walk the front hallway. Pause and ponder each image of Mary. Treasure what arises in your heart.

Listen to all that confronts you, all your questions...and allow God's Word to carry you...and Mary, Mother of GOD to accompany you.

Now, we bring all that we are and long for  
in ourselves and for our world  
to the Table.....

Marietta Fahey, SHF  
January 1, 2012