

## Mary, the Mother of our Lord



I want to take you a long way back—back beyond the day of your birth—back beyond the beginning of the Church—back beyond the beginnings of mankind—way, way back—to the Big Bang—the Creation of the Universe. That's 13.7 billion years in our measurement—but only yesterday as God measures time.

God's creative will at that moment brought the Universe into Being. Astronomers would call this moment, the "Big Bang", because from it, everything in the Universe would come—or as Eucharistic Prayer #4 says so beautifully: "... At your command all things came to be: the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth, our island home..."

From the very beginning, God intended to bring human beings into existence. We were to be the climax of His Creation—beings who could respond in love to His Love—Beings who could know Him, and live in union with Him, enjoying the beauty of His Creation. But to love, humans had to have free will—freedom to love or to not love. So, God knew He was taking a chance—He knew that humans might easily choose selfishness and sin, instead of the Love and Joy of God. And knowing this—at the same moment that God created the Universe, He was also creating a Rescue Plan—a Plan to Rescue humanity if we should choose the wrong way. Would that Plan be needed? You bet it would.

As a human race, we chose against God, chose a route of selfishness instead of a route towards God. We chose to turn our backs on God—to do it our own self-centred way—and we failed. We were created to love God and be with Him forever—but instead we chose to love ourselves and be without God for ever. And when you were born, you found yourself cut off from God by the corporate sins of all the billions of humans who had gone before us. Destined to live a life of selfishness and loneliness—and to add our personal sins to the overarching dark mass of sin that others had done before—an incredible cloud of darkness that hides us from the face of God. Who would rescue us from this intolerable condition and restore us to what God intended in the first place—only God Himself.

And so, the Rescue Plan of God was put into operation. God sent prophets and teachers to us, to every religion, to tell us what He is like, and how much He loves us. We stoned the prophets, perverted the teachers, and broke every law that we were given. Yet still God did not give up.

As the religions of the world developed, there was one religion that was closer to the truth than any other one—Judaism. So, God concentrated on the people of the Jews, sending them prophets and teachers and leaders, building upon the wisdom of those who had

gone before, ever coaxing the Jewish people to grow closer to Him, to respond to His love.

It was a long uphill battle, and it took thousands of years, but God persisted. He wanted to rescue us, to bring forgiveness to us, to show us how much He loved us. Until one day, the Jews had learned enough about Him to recognize Him and looked forward to a Messiah who would come to complete the job. The Messiah, they thought, would be a Holy Man, perhaps a Prophet and Teacher all rolled up in one—but never did they think that the Messiah would be God Himself. It was to be God's final step in the Great Rescue. At last, the time was come. God was ready to visit us on this planet, to put the Great Rescue into action.

But how would we men and women recognize God? Somehow God would need a human body that He could use—a human body so that we could see, hear, and touch Him. God would need to be born.

The thought of “God being born on earth” stuns the imagination. I suspect that the angels thought it was a pretty crazy idea. The Bible tells us that the Jewish Leaders were not ready for such an amazing event. To be “born on earth,” God needed a human mother. And she had to personally agree to be the Mother of God.

And so, the search was on ---everything else was ready—but a young woman was needed. And God intended to ask her for her Permission! For Permission, you understand—the God who had created the Universe, who had prepared the Great Rescue Plan—this God was going to ask a young woman for Permission to be the Earthly Mother of God.

I have no idea how many young women were approached by the Angel Gabriel—it could have been just one, or possibly dozens. The choice was limited—it had to be a teenage girl, a virgin, one who was already deeply in love with God, one who was prepared to give up all her other dreams to work with God, and one who had a prospect of marriage so that the “Son of God” would have a guardian. And she had to personally agree. Now that's a tall order. A lot of young women that I know would not be prepared to buy into a deal like that. But until such a woman was found, the Great Rescue, Salvation itself, was on hold.

And then the Angel Gabriel visited a young woman in the town called Nazareth. Her name was “Mary.” She had been saying her prayers when suddenly an Angel appeared before her. She was scared—who wouldn't be. But then the Angel spoke—“Hail Mary, you are full of Grace,” he said, “the Lord is with you.” Mary was stunned. To see an Angel was terrifying enough, but to hear him tell her that she was “full of Grace” was more than she could imagine.

And then the Angel told her God's plan for the Great Rescue. Would Mary cooperate with God? Would she be the Earthly Mother of the Son of God? All creation held its breath, waiting. Even the angels were still waiting for the answer from this young teenage girl.

And Mary said: “Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord; be it unto me as you have said.”

That was it—that was the YES that God needed. With her YES to God, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and a Child was conceived in her womb. That Child was to be both God and man—and we would call him—Jesus—Jesus the Son of God and Son of Mary.

All of history funnels down to that event—that YES from Mary was the turning point of history. Mary had become the Tabernacle of God, and within her womb, the Son of God took shape. No other person in this world can make that claim—Mary is absolutely unique. She and she alone is the earthly Mother of God. She bore him, nursed him, taught him to speak and to pray, and cared for him through His growing life. She was there at the first Christmas, and she would be there at the Foot of the Cross. She was there to witness to His Resurrection, and there to witness the Coming of the Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church. Always Mary is there, quietly pointing us—not to herself—but to Jesus, her Son. And I believe she is there right now in heaven with Jesus, never in the foreground, but always at His side. For if a son can love his mother, how much more does the Son of God love his mother—the Mother who continues to say YES to Him.

This Christmas Eve, as you sing Carols in the Church, don't forget to say Thank You to Mary, for her Faith and Obedience that began your Salvation. When you bring your children to kneel before the Creche, by all means tell them about the Baby Jesus—but spare a moment too to point to the lovely young woman kneeling beside Jesus, and tell your children her Story, a Story that sparkles with love and joy through all the realms of Heaven. Share with them how much can be done when one person says YES to God. Mary did—so can you.

As the Bible says:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women.

And as the Church responds:

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Pray for us, Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ our Saviour. Amen