

Walking with Mary, Part 2

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I am Dr. Edward Sri and excited to continue this session on walking with Mary. We're looking at the human dimension Mary, with St. John Paul II call "Mary's interior, pilgrimage of faith." What was going on in the inside step by step throughout Mary's life so that we can learn how to walk as disciples with the Lord, with Mary as our model.

Talking to God

So, we all love Mary, great to reflect on in this Advent season, last session, we considered the annunciation in how Mary was able to give a big generous yes in her heart to God, her big Fiat because she talked to God about what was troubling her. When the angel came and announced that something big was good about to be asked of her. The Bible says she greatly troubled, but Mary wasn't the kind of person that allowed herself to be controlled by her fears. She was not a slave to her emotions. She rose above those emotions so that she could give her life as a gift to God and to others, so perfectly.

But the reason she was able to do that is she turned to God. She dialoged with God. She talked to him about what was going on and her troubles. And so that's what we want to do. And that was the first lesson we learned is how we want to be like Mary. Well, whatever we face troubles in our marriage and our family and our moral life, and whatever's happening in the church or whatever's happening at the workplace. All the troubles that we face in this world, we should never allow them to lead us into anxiety, where we lose our inner peace. And we do that by talking to God, bringing our troubles to the Lord and begging for His grace so that we can respond to the way He wants us to and give our hearts in a big Fiat to the Lord.

Now that's what we looked at last time. What I want to consider now is the nativity. And I want to look at Mary at Cana and the cross.

Hail Mary

That's what Well, look at, let's ask our lady to pray for us as we begin. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Hail Mary full of grace. The Lord is with thee blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Jesus, Holy Mary mother of God. Pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death, amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Not So Perfect Circumstances

So, I have a question for you. Have you ever received a Christmas card in the mail that has that nice, beautiful, sacred religious art? You know, you picture Mary she's in this beautiful I've got all of these prints in my own home. You know, maybe she's got her hands folded, like this leaning over the major her arms are extended that wide have you seen Mary like that.

You know, it's beautiful. She's wearing red and mostly blue, maybe a little bit of white, you know, but she's got her Mary and blue color on, and it's perfectly draped. Like it just got back. Her clothes just got back from the dry cleaner in time for the Holy Family's first Christmas picture, you know it looks so beautiful. And I love those images because they really reflect the beauty of Mary, her ardent devotion to her son on that night.

But I don't think Mary really looked that way on that first Christmas night. Because what she was experiencing was something quite dramatic indeed traumatic. I mean, think about it. She's in the last trimester of a pregnancy and Roman soldiers come into Nazareth announces big census. She's got to pick up a move with Joseph all the way down to Bethlehem, like a four-day journey to go be counted.

Can I ask if you're a mom out there, do you think, is that on your bucket list to go on a move during your last trimester? Think about how hard that would have been. And then when she gets there, there's not like a big welcoming committee. It's only the Bethlehem chamber of commerce comes out says, oh, you're the blessed Virgin, Mary, the queen mother, the mother of the Messiah come we'll have you get the baby right here. Now she's got to give birth in these austere conditions. She's got to put the baby in a manger. I mean, think about that.

I mean, we sing the song "Away in a manger" every Christmas, but I think that's crazy. think about if there was, you know, a woman in your local hospital that just gave birth and the nurses come in and say, "hey, we don't have a place to put the baby, but so we're going to put it in this place where the goats were just eating out of."

I mean, how horrible that would be. St John Paul II said this was a great sorrow for Mary. That Mary couldn't give the basics of what any mom would want to give. And Mary has the added burden of knowing this isn't any ordinary child. This is the Holy Son of God. The Messiah and he's treated this way, born in such poverty, such humility and rejection. All the Kings of the earth should be falling down and worshipping this child. And yet he's born and put in a manger.

Showing the Way Forward

Do you ever have moments in your life where you're scratching your head and you're wondering what just happened or why is this happening or where what's going on here? Maybe if you don't feel like you're being treated well. Maybe you're not sure where your life is going. Maybe you're just wondering, where are you, God, where are you? Why is this happening? How's this all going to work out?

You know, if you ever had motions like that, I think Mary was right there. St. John Paul II reflects on this, that this was a source of great sadness for Mary. You know, nine months ago, she was told this was the Holy Son of God. This is the great son of David, the Messiah. And here, nine months later, she's treated this way.

You know, I think when we faced moments in life where, you know, we face big crosses where things are turned upside down, we can get discouraged. You know, those of us that are melancholic can kind of close in on ourselves and be like Eeyore in Winnie the Pooh, "Oh Woe is me; life is so hard." and that's not the way forward. That's not what Mary does. Others can get bitter, to you ever see people like they just get bitter at life. They blame everyone for their problems. They're always a victim. And you know, you don't see Mary complaining or whining. That's not what she does.

You know, another thing we could do is some of us who are like the more Type-A personalities, we're just going to like fix it. I'm just going to willing to force things, control thing. I just want things to be like they were before. And that's not what Mary does either. You know, Mary shows us the way forward.

We All Face Suffering

The one thing she does, you know, the Bible says, it says in Luke chapter two verse 19, that Mary kept all these things and ponder them in her heart. Maybe he kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Now that expression describes in the Old Testament to keep into ponder. Somebody who experiences something mysterious. A mysterious dream, a mystery is vision, a mysterious event unfolding in their life. They're not sure what it means, but what they do is they pray to God. It's like, they're interiorly, praying to God about it. And they're saying, "Lord, what are you trying to teach me? What are you trying to show me?" I think that's what Mary is doing here.

You see we, as Christians should be full of faith, we should have confidence that no matter what happens on the exterior of our lives, we're all going to face suffering in this broken world. We brought suffering into this world through sin we're all going to have a share of it, and we're not

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going to run away from it. But we should trust that the God who is more powerful than any suffering can use that suffering to bring some good in us. So whatever cross we face, we should trust God can bring some good out of it. So, you know, let's say I'm worried about my finances or I'm worried about my health or the health of someone I love. I should trust that God can use that to bring some good, or maybe I failed at something, or I did something embarrassing. I'm worried about one of my kids.

Difficulties for Good

You know, all of these things, God can use it for good, no matter what's happening out here, I should always say, Lord, what are you trying to teach me? What is it that you're trying to show me? Why am I responding this way? What is it you're trying to reveal about my attachments, my sinfulness, my weakness, my lack of trust? And what is it that you're inviting me to grow in?

You know, maybe God allows me to experience a failure. You know, like I dropped the ball, I'm a project, you know, at work I don't meet a deadline, I'm embarrassed by this. And I feel like I failed and other people know, and you know, it's just, you know, if that's going on, why does that happen? you know, it's a shame it happened, but God can use that to help me grow in humility. That's a good thing. It's good for me to grow. It's good for me to be humbled and realize I'm not perfect. I don't have it all together. I need you, God, I can't do it all by my organization and time management and planning. you know, I need you. It's good for me to realize. I have to depend on God more. It's good for me to not get a big ego and think I can just manage everything, control everything and be perfect on everything on my own. That's pride. It's good for me to grow in this humility.

Or maybe God allows me to experience some real pain heartache suffering in life so that I can grow in compassion on others who are suffering more than I am. Or maybe God is allowing me to experience a certain darkness. Like I don't know what's happening. And I just have to sit in the darkness with Him trusting He's really there. You know that that growing in trust of the Lord is good for me. So no matter what's happening out here, God can always use it for good.

Luke's Gospel

We just have to be like Mary and keep in ponder. Ask the Lord, what are you trying to teach me? What are you trying to show me? I think Mary as she keeps in ponders the mystery of the son of God being treated this way, born and putting a manger in such poverty and rejection. I think she comes to see what Luke's Gospel subtly shows us.

See Luke's Gospel tells us that Mary, in Luke chapter two, verse seven, the only verse about the birth of Jesus. Is Luke chapter two, verse seven. where the Bible says Mary wrapped the baby in

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swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. Like of all the things we learned about Jesus. We don't learn his eye color, or did he have an innie, or an outie did Joseph cut the cord. We don't learn any of that. We just learned that the baby was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Well, why is that so important? It's because of what the Bible tries to do is use key words back-to-back. And then they'll use those same keywords back-to-back later in the story to make a point, to make a connection. And the only other time we see the words wrapped and laid back-to-back in Luke's gospel comes at the end of the story. And Luke 23 verse 55, where the body of Jesus on good Friday is taken down from the cross and you know what they do. They wrap the body and linen garments and laid in a tomb.

See, Luke's making a connection between Bethlehem and Calvary. Between that first Christmas and good Friday, the way Jesus enters the world in Bethlehem, in poverty, humility, rejection, suffering foreshadows how He's going to leave this world, the climax of His mission. You see, Jesus is the great king of Kings. As Gabriel told Mary nine months previous, but Mary gets a taste of the cross right here at Bethlehem. She gets a foretaste of where this is all going. That Jesus is going to establish His kingdom. He is the great king, but He's not going to come in worldly glory. He's going to establish it through poverty, humility, rejection and suffering. And it all starts right here in the manger. So that's Cana let's move forward. I want to turn to the, I'm sorry that that was Bethlehem.

The Great Wedding Feast

Let's turn to Cana the great wedding feast. Do you know the story? They run out of wine. They go to the one person who can make a difference, Jesus. And Jesus says those strange words in John chapter two verse four. *“Woman, what is this to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.”*

Did you ever wonder about those words? You know, it sounds like a rebellious teenager by our modern standards. You know, like some, some mom says, “Hey, Johnny time to come down for dinner. And Johnny comes and says, Hey woman, what's this to you and to me. my hour has not yet come. I've gotten another half hour on my X-Box mom.” I said that to my Italian mom, I'm in trouble.

But clearly that's not what's going on here because Mary doesn't interpret these words negatively. She assumes whatever they mean. It's something beautiful. Cause she tells the servants, do whatever He tells you and then Jesus performs the miracle. So, whatever these words are, they're nothing negative. But what do they mean mysteriously? So, I'm going to unpack them for you.

Understanding The Wedding at Cana

First of all, when Jesus calls his mother woman, I want you to know that that's so unusual we don't have any instance in ancient Greco, Roman literature, or a Hebrew literature of a son calling his mother, woman. Other men may call woman a woman but never a son. So that tells us Jesus has something in mind, something unique, some particular woman in mind. And what he has in mind is the first woman of Genesis, Eve because she's called "the woman." And there's a great prophecy about her, that the woman, Eve, one day will have a descendant, an offspring, an heir who will crush the head of the serpent Genesis 3:15, the first prophecy in the Bible. The serpent symbolizes the devil.

So, it's all about how the woman will one day have an offspring, a descendant who's going to defeat the devil. And Jesus is saying, you're that woman, I'm that son I'm going to defeat the devil that's a beautiful title of honor for Mary.

And now Jesus goes on to say, but my hour has not yet come and in John's Gospel the hour, there's this big theme about the hour and the hour points to the hour of His passion and death. When Jesus enters Jerusalem on the day, we know as Palm Sunday, riding on the donkey, He says, my hour has come. So, it's this big theme about hour reaching its climax. And in John 12 verse 31, he says in this hour, the son of man will be lifted up from the earth. We'll gather all men to himself, and the ruler of this world will be cast down. So, he's talking about when he's lifted up on the cross, he's going to gather all humanity himself and the ruler of this world. Meaning the devil, the devil will be defeated.

And so Jesus is saying, there's this hour, that's coming the hour of his passion and death, the victory over the devil. But it's not come yet here at Cana. That's what he's saying to Mary. But what's most important. And I want you to pay attention to the most here in the closing couple minutes, if you don't remember anything else, give me your best attention right now. It's the mysterious words in between. What is this to you and to me in Greek, "ti emoi kai soi" It expresses a Hebrew idiom that describes two people looking at the same thing, but from a different angle, a different perspective.

So, Mary's coming to Jesus saying they have no wine. And Jesus is saying, Hey, what's this wine to you? And what is this wine to me? To you It means one thing. But to me it means something else. So, to Mary, it means, you know, Hey, provide wine beverage for this wedding feast. The poor wedding couple, their family is going to be so embarrassed. They're going to be shamed. Can you provide some wine to keep the feast going? a good noble intention, but Jesus comes back and is saying, but to me this wine means so much more. You see if I perform a miracle and changes water to wine, this isn't just about helping the wedding feast and family. No, this is my first public miracle, Mom people are going to start believing in me. And if I perform this first

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public miracle, then you're no longer just mom. You are a woman. You are the woman of Genesis 3:15. And I'm the son that's beginning the public ministry to crush the head of the serpent. But here's the most moving thing, Jesus says to his mother. If I perform this miracle, it's not just about the wedding feast and helping the family. It's my public ministry. People start believing in me, but my hour has not yet come. My hour is not here yet, Mom. Think about what that would mean for Mary.

You know, Mary, I don't know if you remember in the fourth joyful mystery of the rosary, the presentation 40 days old baby, she's holding that she takes the baby Jesus 40 days old up to the temple to be presented. And she meets that strange prophet figure. Simeon who gives the prophecy about how one day this child would grow up. He'll be hated, opposed, he'll be plotted against. One day he'll be killed. That's the image of the sword, symbolizing death and bloodshed, and a sword will pierce Mary's soul. Also, she's going to grieve so much when her son is killed.

Imagine, you know, again, a young mom at a hospital getting this prophecy, that one day your son is going to grow up and he's going to be hated, opposed and assassinated. You know, I would probably moved to Montana and build a bunker and hide my kid, you know, because I'm going to hold onto them for myself. But Mary has the burden for all these years, for 30 years, she has this burden of knowing one day, her son will grow up. He will be opposed. He will be misunderstood. He will be hated. He will be plotted against, and he will be murdered. He will be killed.

And here she is at the wedding at Cana, just asking, oh, can you help with the family? You know, provide some wine. And then Jesus says, what's this wine to you and to me, to you, it's about the family and the feast to me, it's the beginning of my public ministry. But mom, if I perform this miracle, people start believing in me. My hour has not yet come. My hour has not yet come mom. But if I perform this miracle, the clock starts ticking on my life. If I perform this miracle, I begin my public ministry. I begin my Match toward my hour. The hour of my passion and my death. I begin the match to Calvary. Do you want me to press that button right now? Are you sure this is what you want mom? Because if I do this miracle, my hour, not yet come, but the clock starts ticking on my life.

If I were Mary I'd be like, it's okay. We don't need wine lemonade. We'll serve lemonade. You know Cause I'd, again, I'd want to hold onto Jesus for myself. But Mary doesn't skip a beat. She immediately says, yes. Again, renews her Fiat, and she tells the servants, do whatever he tells you. And with full knowledge of what this means now, she commissions Jesus to begin his public ministry. This is the dramatic choice she had to make again she could have just like said, no, no, no, no, let's not do the miracle thing. Let's just have this time together. But she knows that her son is not for herself. Her son has this mission, and she sends him off knowing this is the beginning of the end.

Remember Mary

So, this reminds us of what we should all be doing, whatever we are called by God to do something difficult, something hard, something uncertain. We should be like Mary trusting our whole lives and trusting everything, giving it up, being willing to make the sacrifice, being willing to be heroically generous with whatever God is asking us because it's in that mystery of the cross. That mystery of self-giving that we find our fulfillment in life.

So, let's again, remember Mary, the great model of discipleship all the way from Nazareth, from Bethlehem, from Cana all the way to the cross and every step of the way God's asking her to renew her Fiat to give more, to love more, to surrender more. And that same heavenly Father does the same thing with us. He's always inviting us to take that next step. And my prayer for you is in this Advent retreat that you'll discern that next step and give your heart generously to whatever that may be.