

## Mary's Fiat: Saying Yes to God

### Mary Lenaburg

Hi, everyone. Welcome to Pray More Novenas, the Advent Series. My name is Mary Lenaburg and I'm a wife and a mother, an author, and a speaker. And it is my great privilege to share the next 15 to 20 minutes with you as we get to talk about Our Lady's fiat, how her yes to our Lord to carry the Son of God, how her yes can inspire us to say yes to the plans that God has for our lives as well. We're going to begin with a prayer. We're going to call upon Our Lady to be with us during this time together and then we're going to dive right into scripture. So, let's pray, shall we?

### Opening Prayer

*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. The name of the Father and the Son and the Holy spirit, Amen.*

### Luke 1:26-38

We are going to go to Luke, the gospel of Luke 1:26-38. Let's begin, shall we? *"In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth to a Virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph of the house of David, and the Virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, 'Hail, favored one. The Lord is with you.' But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*

*Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father. And he will rule over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom there will have no end.' But Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be since I have no relations with a man?' And the angel said to her in reply, 'The Holy spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.*

*And behold Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren for nothing will be impossible for God.' Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her."*

## Three Things

Ah, the incarnation, my friends, the great mystery of the church. It all comes to be because of Mary's yes. So, we're going to take a look at how Mary's yes to the Lord, her willingness and her availability. How do we make ourselves available as Mary made herself available? What are the simple ways that we can do this better? And so, we're going to look at three things: Mary's prayer life, her faith in God, and her trust in His plan. And we're going to use those three points to compare what Mary did to what God is asking us to do this Advent season.

So here the angel Gabriel appears to Mary in the garden and he says to her, "***Hail Mary full of grace.***" And then he tells her, "***Don't be afraid for you have found favor with God.***" Now, I imagined myself in that garden as a young woman. And if the angel Gabriel showed up before me, I'm not sure I would remain upright. I'm not sure I would recognize that he was an angel. Because at that time in my life, my prayer life was pretty much non-existent, and I didn't really understand how important it was to have that personal relationship with Christ. And so, I think of that moment for Mary, I think of when Gabriel appeared to her and she gets a little startled and then he calms her down and she simply asked the question. She says, "*How can this be?*" And then he gives her the most beautiful answer. "***The Lord most high will come and overshadow you.***"

## Mary's Prayer Life

So, let's first talk about Mary's prayer life. Mary already had a relationship with God. She was in love with God. She had been raised in the Jewish tradition by St. Anne and St. Joachim. She knew scripture, she had read the Torah. She was raised within the temple. And so, she had this relationship with God and because she was born without sin, there was nothing blocking that relationship. You and I have sin. We don't always hear God's voice clearly because there are things that we have done that have blocked us from God. We have broken that relationship with the Lord in our sin, and we need His forgiveness. We need Him to come and repair the breach between us. And so, Our Lady didn't have that. There was no breach between her and God. And so, I would imagine that God was just always present in her heart and she just knew what to do because He was there with her always.

And so, she has this beautiful relationship, and it all begins with prayer. So how is God asking you to say yes? How do you even know he's asking you? Well, we know because of our prayer. Our prayer is us speaking to the Lord. And then in Holy scripture, right? It's the Lord talking to us and sharing His will with us, sharing His word with us, sharing His guidance, his wisdom with us.

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This beautiful book is the greatest love letter ever written. It's the greatest love story. It's the greatest adventure. It is God pursuing us. If you ever want to know what God thinks of you, how He feels about you, how He sees you, go and look in scripture, read the gospel, read the Psalms. It's beautiful how He pursues you and how He pursues me every single day. His greatest desire is to be in relationship with us. And so, He is constant with us. He is unchanging, He is faithful, He is true. He never leaves us.

### **Mary's Faith in God**

And so therefore, He was in the garden with Mary and because of her fruitful prayer life, her fruitful interior life, she was able to hear His question. She was able to answer His question and surrender herself to His plan for her. So how, how do we have the faith of Mary? Let's think about the name for a minute. *Hail Mary full of grace*. *Grazia*, what does that mean? It means a gift freely given. Mary entered the garden, ready to receive the gift freely given, ready to receive the Lord Jesus. She had faith in something and someone that was bigger than herself. She knew her life was not meant for herself. It was meant to serve her God.

And therefore, as Bishop Barron says, her faith was a passion for the impossible. Faith is a passion for the impossible. It even says in scripture, when Gabriel talks about Elizabeth, that nothing is impossible with God. Mary could not be the light bearer of Christ without God. She could not do it by herself. And so her faith in God to be with her, to walk with her, to overshadow her and take her to a place that she could not go herself. That is such a gift to us to see her faith in action.

When she says, "*Thy will be done according to thy word. They will be done according to thy word.*" "God, I want what you want." "I want what you want," St. Gianna Molla would say that. I want what you want, Lord. Just, I have faith in you. And the faith that Mary has allows her to be carried, allows her to be overshadowed, allows her to surrender her life to the most high God so that He now will lead her as He has from the beginning. He will continue to lead her to raise this little boy who would one day die on the cross for you and for me. Her faith and that all things are possible with God. Such a gift to witness.

### **Mary's Trust in God**

So with Mary's internal life being fully alive and fully fleshed out, she just had this depth of prayer, which led her to have a depth of faith, which then in turn leads her to have incredible trust in God's wisdom and His provision. Here, we have Mary with Joseph and Joseph is going to divorce her because he knows the baby's not his, but he doesn't want to bring more shame to her. And he goes to sleep and he has a dream. And the angel appears to him and says, "No, no, this child is the Son of God." And what does Joseph do? He gives his own yes to provide for her, to protect her, to raise this baby as his own. It's the beauty of the yes. With that trust, you are saying, and they were saying yes to a life that they could not comprehend or know. At least Joseph was, Mary might've had a clue or two. But Mary's yes and her trust continued throughout her life.

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First, we have the enunciation where she gives her fiat. Then we have the visitation where she goes and she serves out that yes. Then we have the presentation in the temple where Simeon tells her heart is going to be pierced and yet she still continues on. She doesn't give up, she doesn't quit. She continues to care and love for Jesus. And then a little later on in scripture, you have, you know, where they find them in the temple. Now she was human, so I'm sure she was worried. She didn't know what was going on. And when he says, "*I'm doing the work of my Father.*" "Oh, I see now, I see now."

And then it's Mary who looks at Jesus at the wedding of Cana and says, "It's time." And looks at the servants and says, "Do whatever he tells you." We are those servants. We are the ones standing in our lives with our jugs filled with water, ready to pour out the wine. And the only way we get the wine is by allowing God to overshadow us by saying yes to Him and to His plan for our life, so that He might carry us to a place that we cannot get to ourselves.

### **A Difficult "Yes" to God's Plan**

How do I know all of this? I have lived this life. I had the great honor and privilege of being my daughter's caregiver. My daughter, Courtney's nurse. For 22 years, I cared for a medically fragile, profoundly disabled child. And for the first seven years of that journey, I didn't say yes at all. As a matter of fact, I said, "Heck no! I'm not interested, Lord. You go your way, I'll go my way, we shall not meet again." And I really fought this yes That He was asking of me, the surrender and acceptance, the surrender of my life and the acceptance that I have to rely totally, completely on Jesus for everything, for everything I needed to provide for my daughter, for everything that needed to happen in her life. My yes which came when she was seven.

You know that profound moment where you recognize it's not going to go the way you think it's going to go. I had had an earlier moment when she was five weeks old, where it was the beginning of that journey and then seven years of the battle. And then finally, it was, "Okay, Lord, I surrender all. I surrender all." And what God showed me in the following 14 years of her life was that we are meant to say yes every single day. I had no idea what my future looked like. I had no idea what my daughter's future looked like, but every single day we got up and we started a new day. Just like the resurrection, Good Friday to the resurrection, we went to sleep and we got up again. We fell down and we got up again every day for 22 years.

And then on the day our Lord brought my daughter home, December 27th, 2014, as I had the great honor and privilege of holding her while she took her last breath. I knew on that day, God was asking me to say yes again to a totally different life, to a life without my child this side of heaven, to serve in a different way as I had served with my Courtney, to have faith in Him and His plan for my life, to trust Him with my provision and my care, because in a breath, my life changed and it was no longer the same.

## **The Importance of Prayer Life**

God asked me to say yes to a new plan. And when I did, so many blessings came. It doesn't make it easier that I have lost a child. It makes it different because I want what God wants. I want to do what He needs me to do. And in order for that to happen, I have to say yes. I have to allow the Holy Spirit to overshadow me. I have to allow Him in so that I can go where God needs me to go.

And all that drives that is my prayer life. I have to listen for His still small voice. I've just spent time in scripture and in the sacraments so that I get to know Him, so that I build that faith and that trust in Him. God might be asking you a very hard yes right now. It might be a medical condition, it might be a bad marriage. It might be a child who's left the faith. It might be, you know, you've lost your job. I don't know what the hard thing is. But like Mary, when she presents our Lord in the temple and Simeon told her of the seven swords that would pierce her heart.

My prayer is that you, my friend, will have the grace to receive what the Lord has for you. We are called to be like Job, right? Everything was taken from him, everything. And yet he sat on that heap of ash covered in boils and said, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." our Lady was in that garden. She said her yes, she went through her life and at the end, she's standing at the foot of the cross watching her son be murdered, die. And yet she opened her arms wide and said, "Your will be done. Your will be done according to thy word, because I want what you want, Lord."