

Mary's Fiat & Offering Our Own Deanna Bartalini

Hello everyone, it's Deanna Bartalini for the Pray More Advent Retreat. Our topic today is about Mary, Mary's fiat. Let's begin in prayer.

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Father, we thank you for giving us the special gift of Our Blessed Mother. As we begin our talk today, let us turn to her with the utmost confidence that she'll be with us and guide us in all that we say and do.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst 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.

How God Prepare Mary to Be The Mother of Jesus

Fiat. Mary gave her fiat. She gave her yes. And in that yes, she became the mother of Jesus. How did Mary become the mother of Jesus? Yes, it was in her saying yes, but it didn't happen instantaneously. So we're going to take a look at not only how was Mary prepared before she gave her fiat, but all throughout Jesus' life, and how we too are being constantly asked to give our yes to Jesus and yes to the Father.

So first of all, Mary was prepared to become the mother of Jesus. And how was she prepared? Well, first of all, God did an amazingly awesome thing for her. It tells us in the Catechism of the Catholic Church in number 411, it tells us that *"God preserved Mary from all original sin from the moment of her conception and that gave her a special grace to have no sin of any kind during her entire earthly life."*

I simply cannot imagine that because I am not Mary and I have sin. But that doesn't mean God doesn't give me grace. It doesn't mean he doesn't give you grace. We're going to talk about that. The other thing to remember is that God asked Mary to become the mother of Jesus. He didn't coerce her, He did not force her, He asked her. And Mary was able to say yes. She was able to say, give her fiat. She was willing because she knew who God was, and she trusted Him fully, that whatever He asked of her, it would be good and would work for her good. She had amazing trust because she knew who God was. She knew and she knows who God is. And so she was able to say yes. She had great faith and great trust.

So then after Mary realizes she is indeed going to have a child through the intercession and the work of the Holy Spirit, what does she do? She prepares herself. She takes this seriously, as one would imagine the Mother of God would do. First, what does she do? She goes to Elizabeth, and all of this that I'm going to talk about pretty much is in Luke Chapters 1 and 2. So you can take a look at that as a reference point to help you understand a little more fully what I'm talking about. But she went to her cousin, Elizabeth, because she also found out that Elizabeth was going to

have a child, which was also miraculous. So Mary wants to share the miracle that she's having Jesus And support Elizabeth in the miracle of her giving birth to her son, John. The similarities there are that the conceptions are miraculous. Mary, through supernatural, Elizabeth natural but miraculous because scripture tells us she was well past the age where she should have been able to bear a child. Both had angels. Zachariah has an angel, Mary has an angel. Both are told what to name their sons in the encounter. And they indeed do name their sons the names that the angels tell them to name them, Jesus and John.

What else about Mary shows us how she prepared herself? Well, she followed the rules of her faith, right? We see that in, initially, what does she have to do? She has to leave her home and she has to go to the census. And so she does that and that's how she winds up giving birth to Jesus in Bethlehem.

So she follows those rules. After Jesus is born, what does she do? The rules of her faith. Jesus was circumcised and named Jesus after eight days, the way it was to be. She presented him in the temple. She, after her time of purification was over. She made an offering. We see then that when Jesus is older, we see the family going to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Again, following the rules of her faith. Those gave her grace to continue to do what she needed to do to be the mother of Jesus.

The Growth of Mary's Fiat

Simeon, when she goes to the temple to present Jesus, Simeon prophesizes and says that a sword will pierce her heart and that Jesus will be the cause of division for many, but that she will also be honored. And Mary took all of this in, and as Jesus grew, she came to understand what all of these words meant. She grew in her understanding. She grew in her fiat, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, as Jesus went from being a baby to being a man. And her growing in her fiat is what allowed her to stand at the foot of the cross and watch her son be brutally killed because she gave her fiat every day to God, every day to being Jesus' mother she gave her fiat.

And she understood more and more what was going to be asked of her, not only in the daily tasks of being a mother. Yes, those were important and necessary, of course, but I'm talking about the ultimate task, the ultimate ask to stand with her son as he died for us. And she was able to do that. Mary's fiat grows as Jesus grows. And every time she said yes, her faith and trust grew. And I think that happens with us as well. I believe that, very strongly, because I have seen that.

The Influence of God's Fiat

So what does Mary's fiat show us? It shows us that just as she kept saying yes because of God's grace, we can keep saying yes because of God's grace. We can rely on God fully, without any hesitation. I talked about that in the talk on trust, how we can come to see God acting in our life to trust Him more. Mary relied on God. She did not rely on herself, she relied on God. And yes, her nature was sinless and that's very, very important. And she was sinless in thought and in deed because that is how God prepared her to say yes.

And God was constantly present in Mary's life, but He constantly prepares us too. He doesn't just say do what I want and bye-bye, good luck. You know, pats you on the head and says, okay, see you later. He is right there with us at all times. He gives us strength and grace. Grace is an amazing gift from God.

We have the grace of our baptism. That's a sacramental grace. It is a continuous grace that is inside of us. It doesn't go away. The grace of our baptism has made us God's child and it stays with us always. And so we have that sacramental grace of baptism. We have the sacramental graces of Eucharist, confirmation, communion, matrimony, anointing of the sick. All of those are sacramental graces that we can receive when we receive the sacraments.

And then there are those signal graces, those little signs that we see God is present throughout our day. When we find a parking spot when there are no parking spots and we need to get into the building quickly. Those are little signal graces. When we're feeling down and a friend calls us up, it's a signal grace. God is watching. God is present. And there's the actual grace that we can ask for right before we have to do something difficult. We have to give birth, we have to bury someone, we have to give a talk. We have to take a big test. It doesn't mean that we don't prepare in the ways that we should prepare mentally, emotionally, cognitively, whatever you want to say, but it means that we also know that whatever we do is important, but then we're going to have this supernatural help from God. When we give our yes and we ask for the grace, God will give it to us.

How Do We Access God?

God is also present in our trials and He's present in our blessings. He is always there. He was always there for Mary and He was always there with us. Now, how do we access God? You know, it's one thing to say, well, Mary was very close to God, she lived with His son. She had a very close connection. We too can have that close connection. It is through prayer, it's through reading His word, and it's through the Church. We can't just take one of them. We can't say, well, I'm going to sit in my room and I'm going to pray. Because oftentimes, our prayers are very one-sided. We do a lot of talking. We aren't quiet.

And prayer is not only talking but it's listening. I'm not going to get too much into that because that's a topic of another talk that I'm giving about how to have a habit of prayer. And we're going to talk more about that in that talk. But just to know that prayer is integral into being able to consistently say yes to God.

The other thing that is very helpful for me is to acknowledge God's greatness. You might say to me, well, of course, I acknowledge God is great. Yes, but more, like, the whole sense that God is so great and yet he is taking care of you. He is taking care of us every minute of every day. And when I think about that and I am called to say yes to something that is beyond what I believe I am capable of, I can say yes because I believe God and His greatness is with me.

The other thing is that we often put God in a box. Well, I go to church and I pray, and so that's where God is. Or I read my bible and that's where God is. Or when I pray the rosary, that's where God is. And true, God is there in those times, but God is not only there. God is everywhere.

Don't leave Him in His little box where you sort of give Him the problems that you think He needs to handle and then try to handle the rest of your life on your own. When Mary gave her fiat, she gave her fiat to whatever was going to happen, knowing that God would be beside her and give her the grace and courage and the strength to do what needed to be done.

Remember, she was a human being. She was a woman who needed God's help to raise His son. She needed His help to stand at the foot of the cross. We need God's help as well to keep giving our fiats. The other thing that I like to remember is that when Mary said yes, she said yes to giving birth to a baby. She didn't necessarily know what it would be like to have a toddler or a teenager or a young man. So she had to keep saying yes. And we need to keep saying yes to keep going back to God and reiterating our yes.

Verses from the Canticle of Mary

Mary had a reason why she was able to say yes as well, and she did it to proclaim God's goodness. And I want to read just a couple of verses from that beautiful Canticle of Mary that Luke has in Chapter 2. Chapter 1, excuse me. "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God, my savior." Then, I'm going to skip a verse. "And then she says, 'The mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is His name.'" Do you notice she doesn't say, hey, I am so awesome and this is why God did this for me. No, God did this for me because He is so awesome. Mary says, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord."

She doesn't say I'm proclaiming how great I am. She's proclaiming how great God is. And that is why she is able to give her fiat. If I say yes and rely on myself, oh, I am in big, big trouble. When I say yes and rely on God. Okay, we're going, we're going, we're doing this. It's going to happen. I may not know how it's going to turn out, and I may not know the total end of the story or see the path all the way through, but I know who's with me. And that's what's important.

And so like Mary, when we are asked to do something and it comes to pass, we can't say, hey, look how great I am. No, we have to say, look how great God is. Look what God has done for me. Look what God has done for us. Look what God has done in this situation. God works through us. He works with us. If we believe that we're going to work independently of Him and still be giving our fiat, I don't know that that's going to work because too much of us is going to get in the way. Too much of us is going to get in the way of that.

How Can We Say Yes to God?

So how are we going to keep saying yes to God in all things? Because that's really what we want to do. Our humanity gets in the way of that. Gets in my way all the time, my humanity. I have a lot of humanity. I screw up on a regular basis, but I keep going back to Him. And this is what I think about. I think about, one, I invite God into all parts of my life. I do not keep Him in a box. I do not ignore Him. When I think it's too ugly or messy, I invite Him in no matter what. I give my yes every day to small things.

Every day I start my day with saying, yes, I'm going to do this. And some days, I don't know what I'm going to do next, but I say yes to the thing that's in front of me and I do it. I want you to

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try to listen also to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. You know we get that gut feeling. It's not your gut, it's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is prompting you to do something, to call someone, to move forward, to stay still. And we dismiss it. Oh no, that can't be God. No, that can't be the Holy Spirit. It can. It can. And it often is. And so we need to be in tune to that.

Each yes that we give to God redeems us a little more and helps us move forward. Maybe we move forward in the task. Maybe we move forward into trusting God more. Maybe we move forward into more accepting what God is asking us to do or His will for our life. But each yes redeems us and moves us forward.

And then this is probably the most important and what Mary did that allow your yes to proclaim God's greatness, not your own. Allow your yes to proclaim God's greatness, not your own. It doesn't mean that we don't think we did a good job or that we did not succeed, or that what we did wasn't important. It means saying that yes, we were able to accomplish whatever it is because of the grace of God. And so that is why we give Him the glory. I hope that helps you, and I hope that you are able to consider giving your fiat as Mary did so that you too are able to birth something wonderful with God.

Closing Prayer

As our closing prayer, I want to read the Canticum of Mary. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God, my savior. For He is looked upon His handmaid's lowliness. Behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is His name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear Him. He has shown might with His arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry, he has filled with good things, the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped Israel, His servant, remembering His mercy according to His promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. I pray that this retreat continues to bless all that is going on in your life and help you grow closer to God, and know that as you are going through this retreat, I am praying for you.