

Mary, Mother of God – 2024

Every year, as the calendar turns from December to January, it is natural to look back at the year now concluded, and to look ahead to the year about to unfold. The New Year reminds us that time marches on, *but our lives are measured not so much by the passing of days and weeks and months, but by the experiences we live through – events and relationships and moments and decisions that gradually give a unique form to our lives. For each of us, there are moments that are frozen in time ... joys or sorrows or fears or events that remain vividly etched in our memories, even decades later.*

For Mary, I have no doubt that the Annunciation was one of those moments. “*Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You shall conceive and bear a Son, and you are to name Him Jesus.*” Her response remains the pattern of faith for every believer: “*Let it be done according to your word.*” With that assent, Mary’s entire life changed, forever – but not in an instant. In other words, Mary’s “Yes” to becoming the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God, and thus truly to be called the Mother of God, began a new relationship with her Lord, but one that would unfold, in both joys and sorrows, with moments of light and times of darkness, over many years. *It was a beginning, not an end; it was a departure, not an arrival; it was an opening act, and not the grand finale.*

St. Luke tells us so beautifully that “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” The Greek verb Luke uses here literally means “*pieced together*” or “*assembled.*” That is, Mary’s faith and openness to God did not give her the entire answer all at once to the questions of her life and her part in God’s plan ... but it gave her the trust and patience to slowly, consistently, and gradually piece together this puzzle of what God was asking of her. Remember that Mary is Mother of God not only in those nine months of her pregnancy with the fruit of her womb, Jesus; not only in that poor but glorious cave in Bethlehem; not only in the peaceful and hidden years of Nazareth as Jesus grew. She was Mother, too, as her Son walked the Way of the Cross; Mother, too, as she stood with John beneath her dying Son;

Mother, too, as she held the Body of her crucified Child just as she had held that same Body, all those years before, when the Magi came to adore. And Mary remains the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of the Body of Christ, and so the Mother of the Church, even till today. And all through those years, Mary still pieces together, assembles, builds up wisdom and truth in her Mother's heart.

None of us will have the same relationship with Christ as Mary does; the Incarnation took place once and for all through her trusting faith. But that same Jesus still desires to speak into our lives and come to life in our words, our actions, our prayer, our trust. For us, too, a "Yes" to God will not give us the entire answer, all at once, to the questions of life. But each Yes matters, part of an enduring relationship with the Lord, even when we cannot fully understand, even when it leads us closer to the Cross, as it did for Mary.

Like her, our lives of faith mean we need to piece together particular moments and choices and build up wisdom and truth in our hearts ... with patience, with faith, with fidelity, to hold onto the bits and pieces of God's Word to us in the events and circumstances of our lives. Today we honor our Mother in the order of grace, still helping to give flesh to God's Word by her prayers and love. ***"Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ."***