

MARY – JUST A GLIMPSE

Through the pages of the gospels we get little glimpses of Mary. An event or two here, a crisis there, her presence added as a sort of footnote elsewhere. Much is left to our imagination as to her character, her story and her place in the life of the Church.

Her story has been overlaid with the piety of centuries. Much of this piety lives on in various forms and some of it finds its way into the Church's Liturgy by way of the many Feast Days which honour Mary.

As we celebrate our Parish Feast today let's visit Mary for a little chat, a cuppa and a moment's reflection.

PREGNANT – ME? AT MY AGE?

Whatever the circumstances of Mary's life at the time, we know she became pregnant, that God through the Holy Spirit played a defining role in the event, and that Joseph was probably very surprised.

We also know that Mary took the news with some questions in her heart, with some doubts and with some awareness of what this news would mean for her socially.

We also know that she said "yes" without any strings attached.

We can often be faced with situations that put us on the outer with family, work colleagues, church or society, and which we know are situations to which we must respond. We pray for the same intelligent, questioning acceptance that marked Mary at this point in her life.

OFF TO EGYPT

The world in which Joseph and Mary lived was every bit as dangerous as the world in our time. Like millions of people today, Mary and Joseph were displaced people for a time, fleeing from danger and without a home to call their own. They travelled bravely and perhaps in isolation at times.

When I'm lost where do I turn? Who gives me direction and tends my aching heart?

When I see others lost, seeking refuge, do I use the law as an excuse not to respond to them or can I see beyond the law to the heart that cries out for my acceptance and welcome?

PARTY TIME

Six stone water jars at Cana. A hundred gallons each. That's some party! Mary here becomes the means for God's overflowing love to be broken open and shared when it seemed that the party was all but over. God is never done with us.

Where are the signs of my abundant self-giving?

BY THE CROSS

The old cliché that no parent should see the death of a child comes to mind.

Here is Mary standing by as Jesus suffers and breathes his last. She holds his body tenderly and only a grieving mother will know what is in her heart at this time. We could well suppose that her attention was on him at this time rather than on her own suffering, although at some time she must have allowed her own heart to break.

In my own times of grief, I need to be alone with my own heart and often enough at the same time accompany the grief of those around me. Am I able to hold these two needs in balance and do I have access to the help I may need at these times?

Does the image of Mary at the foot of the Cross have something to say to me here?

BRING ON THE SPIRIT!

The Acts of Apostles notes that Mary is present when the Holy Spirit enlivens and releases the disciples. Just as the Spirit moved at the time of Jesus' conception, so now at the conception of the Church, Mary is there in the midst of the action, giving birth if you like, to the Body of Christ.

As we celebrate our Feast Day with her and each other, let our hearts be full of thanks as we "give birth to God's Word in our turn."

Father Kevin