

Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
 Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
 for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
 and holy is his name.
 His mercy is for those who fear him
 from generation to generation.
 He has shown strength with his arm;
 he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
 and lifted up the lowly;
 he has filled the hungry with good things,
 and sent the rich away empty.
 He has helped his servant Israel,
 in remembrance of his mercy,
 according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
 to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Mary visits her older cousin Elizabeth, who is expecting a baby who will be named John. When the two women greet they are acutely aware that God is acting now in their lives and in the world. Both have said yes to God in extraordinary ways. Elizabeth blesses Mary and Mary responds with a song from the Hebrew Scriptures—Hannah’s words of gratitude for the promise of her son Samuel, who will become a prophet. Luke, the author of the Gospel reading this morning, wants us to remember that God is acting *in the world* and Mary is the one who is not only the “God-bearer” but the one who listens to God, and is indeed a follower of Jesus.



Mary and Elizabeth
 Lauren Wright Pittman, 2018



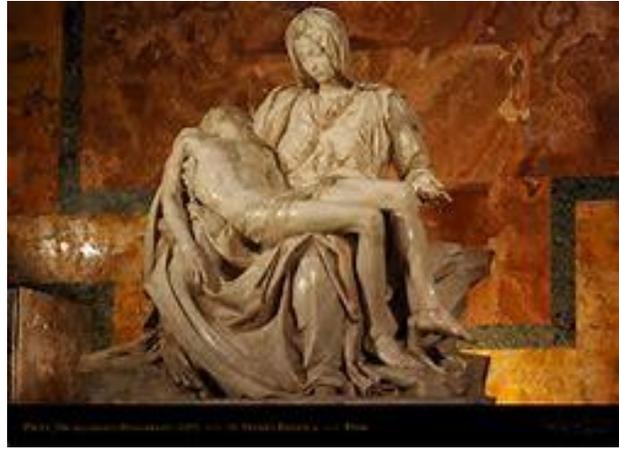
Theotokos “of three hands” Saint John of Damascus,
 Eighth century, image maybe earlier

Not only will Mary be blessed, she will lead *us* in following Jesus, saying yes to God’s love in the world. This is not about a baby, but about God acting in our midst. The social context will be upended by the birth of this child; God brings into the world the Messiah who changes the way we are invited to live with one another, “he has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.” Jesus’ preaching and teaching will be to reach out to the poor and the sick, and bring good news to the disenfranchised *and* those whose hearts have closed to the hearing of God’s Word. Mary herself will be a witness to Jesus’ ministry and participates with God working in the world and it will lead to sorrow and joy.

Mary, Mother Mary, Mother of God, Virgin Mary, God-bearer, Holy Mary, Saint Mary—all words generations have used to name our own relationship with the woman who said yes to God. Mary, mother, is not just a Christmas Mary. Mary finds her heart broken by the powers of the world. We find our hearts broken too.



El Greco, Pieta 1571-1576



Michelangelo, Pieta 1498-1499

And how shall this be? The hungry will be filled with good things, and the rich will be sent away empty. It is not a reversal of fortunes, it is the emptying and breaking of our hardened hearts and ways—so that we can see and care for God's whole world. To say yes with Mary is to follow Jesus, and enter into the mystery of our faith—that in dying we shall be raised. "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." Romans 6:5 To say yes is to find ourselves changing and embracing in big and small ways the world God desires for all of us. Many believe Mother Mary, can help us.



Earliest known image of Mary from the catacombs, Rome 150 CE

Mary joined the disciples, in prayer and deed. *They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers .Acts 1:14*

I thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon your servant the forgiveness of sin, and have raised me to the new life of grace. Sustain me, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give me an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen. BCP service of Baptism

Susan