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Although sharing much common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry, often Mary and Bob find themselves approaching ministerial concerns from different angles... *He said - She said* is a venue to share differing perspectives and provide food for thought.

## Reflections on the Blessed Virgin Mary

### *Bob's Perspective:*

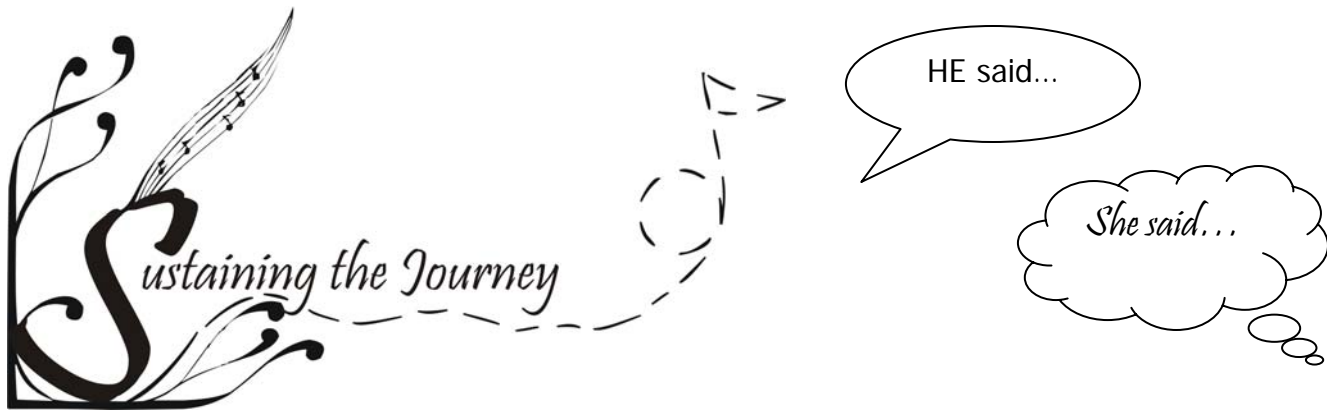
Over the course of this year, the focus of Adult Education in our parish has been the Blessed Virgin Mary. Guided masterfully by our Parish Catechetical Leader, Sr. Helene Skrzyniarz, we have been presented with a number of dimensions of Mary to be considered. These range from the various apparitions and miracles –to those who witnessed them - to the impact that Mary’s messages have made in our lives and in the life of our Church in the world.

By all accounts, Mary was a simple teenage peasant girl who lived in a relatively obscure part of the Middle East over 2000 years ago. I find it incredible (in a good way) that such a person could so profoundly impact the lives of us who live in the modern world.

That being said, a most significant insight was stirred in me a few weeks ago as we viewed the movie, *Mary of Nazareth*. This work encompasses the life of our Lord from the prospective of his Mother. While we tend to think about Mary and Jesus in terms of the biblical presentation, many times we don’t think about the struggles and challenges that Mary faced in her life. By accepting God’s will, she accepted all of the hardships as well as the joy of being the Mother of Jesus.

As of late, I have taken some time to consider Mary as Jesus’ mom (a human perspective). In a time and place where women were considered to be property – merely second class citizens at best, Mary nurtured and raised her Son. Her homeland was under foreign occupation, so expressing any religious belief was a dangerous affair. She worried about him when he came up missing in the caravan until she and Joseph found him in the temple. She was directive of him (as only a mom can be) as illustrated by the Wedding Feast at Cana. She was fiercely loyal as she remained at the foot of the cross – risking personal peril with only a few others.

Mary’s life was far from easy – and witnessing the rejection, pain, suffering and execution of her Son must have been heartbreaking at the very least. Yet she endured by having faith. There are a number of lessons to be taken from all of this – lessons about faithfulness, lessons about enduring hardships, lessons about patience, and lessons about unconditional love.



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If you haven't done so recently, it might be a good idea to pick up a rosary once in a while and ponder the Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious or Luminous Mysteries as you pray. If you're pressed for time, mindfully recite the Magnificat (My soul magnifies the Lord...), the Salve Regina (Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy...) or the Memorare (Remember, most loving Virgin Mary...).

*Mary's perspective:*

I once gave a talk where I described the Blessed Virgin Mary as a deliberate Mystery of God. Scripturally, we learn very little about her. She is prophesied about in Genesis, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah. There are a few stories in the New Testament, but beyond that, we are left to fill in the blanks from our own perspective. Whether we relate to Mary as mom, or as sister, or friend, we have an image of this woman filled with trust. Essentially, she said, "Okay, God even though I don't see the big picture, I trust because You do. You know my weakness and you challenge me to grow. If you can use me, so be it..."

Through anguish and struggle, helplessness and joy, she still found peace.

Our Marian devotions really come down to two things... praise and petition. We recognize our Holy Mother as worthy of praise, of imitation, of adulation. (Hail, Mary, full of grace!) And we bring our needs to her, asking for her intercession (Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners...)

We don't necessarily know the answer to our needs - perhaps we should pray for opportunity and wisdom. Give thanks for all the many blessings with which we have been graced. Sing praise to the God who gives us life - every breath - every moment - from the beauty of the spring flowers on the trees to the wonder of the unexpected turns in our lives.

We don't always see the big picture - often we feel abandoned or like the prayer didn't work because we didn't get the response we wanted. But sometimes the answer is part of a bigger picture that we don't know. It's okay to bring your needs and ask for response - but maybe we shouldn't dictate the response we want...

I'm in a unique position where people often share their story with me - I get to be part of life-changing moments... struggles, celebrations, weddings, baptisms, funerals, etc. One of the constants that I have discovered is that we don't always understand the "why" of what has happened, but **peace comes when we surrender to God's will.**