

December 8, 2025



Daily Reflections



Center for
Spiritual
Development

I AM THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD

By David C. Robinson, SJ

Excerpts from Today's Readings

After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree, the LORD God called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself." Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!"

GENESIS 3:9-11

God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. ... In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things.

EPHESIANS 1:3-5, 11

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High....” Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

LUKE 1:30-32, 38

Reflection

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, we reverence the particular and mystical presence of God in the life of Mary from the first moment of her existence. Through the centuries of the emergent Christian communities, this celebration passes through a number of theological iterations and clarifications as the churches attempt to give voice to the redemptive work of God in history. Some focus on the historical uniqueness of her life; others on the cosmic/metaphysical dimensions of God’s action in the world. Needless to say, the complexity of these theological reflections can cause some confusion among the people of faith! It might be useful to pull back from doctrinal particulars to view Mary in the context of the unfolding of divine initiative and creative presence throughout history.

With Adam and Eve, we discover a narrative of the primal foundations of humanity in the story of creation. They do not spring forth like Athena, the goddess of Wisdom, from the mind of Zeus! They are a unique intention of the God of all that is. They are naïve and susceptible to realities beyond their immediate understanding. Their failing was not a doctrinal failure of understanding, or a rebellion on the order of Lucifer. Instead, they represent the first generation of humanity, beginning the endless mortal endeavor to plumb the mysteries of God’s intentions. They learn the often-painful lessons required by the call of **fidelity**. Our spiritualities, religious practices, doctrines, and theologies open a window into the infinite reaches of God in all that is. Ultimately, though, it is our faithfulness to the grounding promise of God’s faithfulness to, and loving intentions for, us that is the cornerstone of our lives. If we set ourselves up as the arbiters of God’s wisdom, we substitute our finite knowledge for the endless unfolding which is God alive in our midst. Adam and Eve left the Garden to cultivate their *fidelity* to God’s living presence in all their journeys of knowledge and love.

In Ephesians, Paul reminds the people that their kinship in God and one another is not a matter of politics or religious tradition, but in fidelity to the **God who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the**

heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world.

In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ.

This is not an invitation to the esoteric or arcane, the inscrutable mystery of the divine. Rather, it is a reminder that all our ways of revering and following God are grounded in a relationship of loving *fidelity*, incarnated in the life of Jesus, who is the living/loving spirit of all we strive to do and become as disciples.

Mary, as mother of Jesus and of the Church, manifests the purest form of *fidelity* as she navigates a path of confusion, uncertainty, and even fear at the overwhelming message of the angel. She cannot know, or deduce, or explain the great horizon of the truth revealed to her. In her acknowledged diminutive person, she does not presume to comprehend what is to come. Her faithfulness to the God who has filled her life since infancy impels her to respond with the conviction of loving trust: **“I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”** The remainder of her life is filled with the wonder, the tragedy, and the mystical new knowledge of God revealed in her son, that show the fruitful harvest of her life of *fidelity*. The gift is not an object of belief or a transaction of obedience. Her spirit, trusting in God’s *fidelity* to her, marks a living fulfillment of a promise revealed and fulfilled.

In our own time and circumstances, beyond all our modes of thought, and spirit, and religious communion, we recognize, and strive to embody, such a *fidelity* in ourselves with and for others and to God. In times of conflict, confusion, and chaotic social currents in our world, we are anointed to a path of *fidelity* -- the inner spirit and conviction that binds us to the inscrutable but intimate ways of God with us. With a wisdom plumbed from a depth beyond words, concepts, knowledge, or religious systems, we possess a rich and evolving union of heart with the One who has called us and whose voice never fails to guide us home.



Mary in Nazareth at Sunset
Image by David C Robinson, S.J.

For Pondering

- How do you experience an inner awareness of God's faithfulness (fidelity) to you, especially in troubled times.?
 - How do you recognize and express the depths of your own fidelity to God in your family? Your community? Your church?
 - In what ways has your fidelity to 'God's life within' enriched your path of walking and working in a word of frequent confusion and doubt?
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