

April 4, 2023



THROUGH THE LENS OF MARY

By Sister Ellen Jordan, CSJ

Sometimes I get into a rut where the “same old” ideas roam inside me and there’s no window to bring in fresh air. Today’s reading (Isaiah 49:1-6) is often like that for me. I’d read it as Isaiah’s experience of God in his life and usually wonder how I’m like Isaiah as God acts in my life. But today it is not so. I wonder what it was like for Jesus’ mother, Mary (or Miriam if we want to be closer to her actual name) to hear those words repeatedly in her life.

As an old woman, how would she have heard those words?

“Hear me, O islands, listen, O distant peoples. The Lord called me from my birth.” Would she not have been in awe to see how her Son’s message and life changed the lives of people globally? While Isaiah’s call was to the people of Israel, Jesus’ life was to bring light and salvation to the world. Even before his birth on earth, He responded to this divine opportunity with a resounding yes in the Trinity, even though it would take his life.

Isaiah says, “God made him a sharp-edged sword and concealed him in the shadow of God’s arm.” Yes, Mary would have remembered. Like a sword,

Jesus' message would have separated true disciples from those who merely made religion a show. Didn't he speak of those who loved to pray in public places and give alms to the poor and destitute in order to get praise? That was a far cry from genuine justice and generosity with the poor.

And Mary might have wondered in awe how God concealed Jesus until the time was right for him to step into the public light with the good news. She would remember the times that God concealed Him from sight, too. First, Jesus was concealed in her womb, a young unmarried woman. Then when Herod caught wind of his birth, God would usher Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to Egypt to live and work anonymously as nameless migrants to powers that were. She would remember how she struggled to learn the Egyptian language and watched in awe as her baby grew into a small child who would speak both languages seemingly easily.

Then Mary would remember how, when Herod died, she and Joseph brought Jesus to a seemingly nothing town on a hill across from a Roman settlement. She would have heard Isaiah's reading with awe as it was proclaimed in her Nazareth synagogue, that Isaiah was called "that Jacob might be brought back to God and Israel gathered to Him." Oh! Jesus' message gathered the *nations* to become God's holy people. It would have meant that Israel's special place in God's plan was so much greater than simply saving Israel. Jesus' life and mission was an invitation to every nation to love and serve as He did; to spread the good news of God's love for every single person on earth!

She heard the final message of Isaiah today with new ears after Jesus' resurrection. "It is too little for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore survivors of Israel." She knew that her son was so much more than a servant who raised up Jacob and restored Israel. Yet from obscurity to death, He was the Messiah, and the savior to all of creation: every nation, every tribe, everyone seeking God, even if they didn't realize that's whom they sought.

And dare we imagine that once in heaven Our Blessed Mother also realized that His death and resurrection changed her future, too? In heaven she became mother to literally millions. From her place there, she was able to answer prayer and occasionally visit earth-bound human beings with her maternal love reaching far beyond the little Holy Family and those she knew in her earthly life. Under so many titles: Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Knock, Our Lady of La Salette, Our Lady of the Good Event, Our Lady of Beauraing, Our Lady of Akita, and so many more places, she appeared to open our eyes to see all her Son is and is doing so that we might see, enjoy and become fully who we are called to be in Jesus.



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