

*The
Joyful Mysteries
of childbirth*

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of Childbirth

A Faith-based, Practical Approach to Childbearing



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& Marlene Waechter

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ISBN 978-1-300-13531-9

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Cover and type design by Peter Gurry — www.gurrydesign.com

Print edition typeset in 14pt Fine Hand and 12pt Briosso Pro.

Printed in the United States of America

First printing 2013

Lovingly dedicated to

The Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,
and our greatest role model for motherhood

and to
the holy woman,
Stanislawa Leszczynski,
midwife at Auschwitz



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Acknowledgements

Many thanks and blessings to all who helped us make this book possible: Jan Tritten, who gave us the inspiration; Andra Lance, Kathy Nesper, Bekah Sealey and many others who contributed many wonderful suggestions; Peter Gurry for the book design; and to all our dear family and friends who were our sounding boards.

Thank you!

Preface

*Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets,
so that one can read it readily.*

—Hab. 2:2

This text has been written to aid Christian women through the childbearing process in a way that glorifies God. It is not our intention to give medical advice or undermine the use of medical interventions, but rather to emphasize the importance of keeping the experience always **Christocentric** and restoring faith in the capacity of the human body, that God so “fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Ps. 139:14). As Paul writes, “there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings, but the same God who produces all of them in everyone... For to one is given, by the Spirit, the expression of wisdom... to another faith by the same Spirit: to another the gifts of healing, to another, mighty deeds; to another prophecy... but one and the same Spirit which produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as He wishes” (1 Cor. 12:4–11). Just as one body has many parts, each with a different, but equally important function, God has a unique plan

for each of us, thus we are called to walk different paths toward the light.

Realizing some words we have used may not be known to all, any word in bold lettering you will find explained in the glossary at the end of the book.

In this book, we pose many questions for prayer and reflection and give you numerous Bible quotes so you can ponder their significance in your life. Our task is not to pass judgment on how you birth, but rather enhance the spirit in which you birth. Whether you ultimately choose home or hospital; doctor, midwife or unattended, know that you should, “be firm and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you where ever you go”! (Josh. 1:9). And, “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord, Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17). God bless you all.

In His Service,
Faye DiGabriele Deptuch, DEM
Marlene Waechter, CPM

Introduction

The virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a son and shall name Him Immanuel...

—Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18–25

Mary, the chosen Mother of the Word Incarnate sets an extraordinary example for mothers everywhere. From whence comes the knowledge for that special motherhood, for her role in God’s plan of creation and salvation, for her role as a model for humankind, and, more specifically for womankind? Both the gospels of Luke and Matthew develop the birth and childhood of Jesus. However, Luke is unique in telling the story from Mary’s viewpoint.

All the chapters of this book focus on pregnancy, birthing and mothering through the perspective of the events in the Gospel of Luke; The Annunciation, The Visitation, The Nativity, The Presentation, and The Finding of Jesus in the Temple. These events are delineated in the Joyful Mysteries of a prayer called “The Rosary,” from which this book draws its inspiration. The full rosary provides a clear and complete review of the great crucial events in the life of Christ. It consists of the Joyful Mysteries (the early life of Christ), the Luminous Mysteries (Jesus’ public ministry), the Sor-

rowful Mysteries (His passion and death on the cross), and the Glorious Mysteries (His Resurrection and Ascension). Many Catholics and other Christians as well, pray The Rosary. Its scripturally based prayers, (the “Our Father,” “Hail Mary,” and “Glory Be”) are recited by rote, while simultaneously allowing the mind to attain spiritual elevation through the meditation on the individual mysteries surrounding the life of Christ. Let us now contemplate these joyful mysteries in the gospel of Luke and seek to integrate their wisdom into our hearts.



The Annunciation by Brigid Marlin

In this painting the angel appears behind Mary to suggest an interior rather than an exterior presence. Mary's reply to the angel has become a measure for all of us—how far are we able to say, “Be it done to me according to thy word—not my will but thine”? There is a sense in which we can all strive to become like Mary—and in emptying our spirits of self-will, the divine child can be born anew in each of us.

1 | *The Annunciation*

“Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.” However, she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then 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.

—Lk. 1:28–31

The Angel Gabriel gave great honor to Mary with his greeting. Yet Mary was troubled and pondered why she, a humble handmaid, was receiving such an extraordinary greeting. Evidently, she must not have seen anything extraordinary in herself that would deserve such praise from God’s holy messenger. She must have been searching her mind for any precedent in scripture, but she would have found none, because no mere mortal had ever been greeted so honorably, nor would anyone ever be again.

Certainly Mary did deserve to be addressed in such a highly esteemed manner. In fact, both the original King James and Douay Rheims versions of this greeting use the most accurate translation, “full of grace” instead of “highly favored.” Certainly, she must have been a very holy maiden, filled with grace to have been chosen by God for her vital role, through which flesh was given to Jesus, the

second person of the Holy Trinity. Certainly, if she was full of grace, it follows that she was empty of selfishness and full of godliness, even before conceiving Jesus in her womb. Certainly, she must have been choosing God's way as her on-going way of life, as foreshadowed in Gn. 3:15. Humbly embracing the wisdom that God's will is the perfect will, she would have been in obedience to her parents (traditionally believed to be Anne and Joachim) and to the word of God through the Old Testament. It would have made no sense for her to do otherwise. What a fitting preparation her holy nature was for her ultimate submission to God, and what a wonderful role model of obedience and humility she is for us.

Gabriel sought to quiet Mary's fears when he said "be not afraid." Those words speak volumes to all of us in our journey of faith as well. Then he told her the most wondrous news. God had chosen her to be the mother of the long awaited Savior, in fulfillment of the prophecy, "The virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son and His name shall be Immanuel" (Is. 7:14). As we know, scripture attests to her faithfulness, and we can be sure she continued to embrace God's will. Our just, all knowing and almighty God gives her the graces she needs to carry her from conception, through pregnancy, the crib, the cross and beyond. She is indeed, "blessed among women" (Lk. 1:42). In fact, she is most blessed of all human beings!

Gabriel awaited her answer for God would honor her free will, while fully desiring her choice to be obedience to Him. Mary's demeanor was to accept God's will to be the mother of the Savior, even without a clear understanding of how it would be accomplished. "How shall this be as I have no relations with a man?" (Lk. 1:34), she asks. Gabriel respected Mary's query, giving her an explanation that required trust in a personal God and a leap of faith, when he answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and

the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” (Lk. 1; 35)

Mary then understood that this was to be done by God’s power, not man’s. Unlike the high priest, Zechariah, she did not doubt God’s power. With her response, “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38), she gave her resounding, “Yes,” to God’s plan for her. She did not complain that it might be too hard, or that she had other plans for her life. No, instead she willingly and unquestioningly, affirmed that she was ready to do whatever God would ask of her.

Mary had free will, just as we do. If she were to look to the world’s idea of wisdom, she might have answered Gabriel with any of the following:

“What about my reputation?”

“This is highly inconvenient right now.”

“Let’s wait until we are married.”

“Joseph is a law-abiding man; he will have me stoned to death!”

“Joseph and I need some time to live life for ourselves before we add the responsibilities of a child.”

“Let’s be practical. We need to save more money first so that we can offer the child more comforts and education.”

“I would be so ashamed, Lord, unless you tell Joseph so that there is full understanding and respect for me.”

The example Mary gave us was total surrender to the Word of God, His power, and His grace. She did not succumb to doubts and fears. She believed in the awesome power of God. She had the wisdom to realize that eternal happiness is best achieved by allowing God to mold her life, “like clay in the potter’s hand” (Jer. 18:6). She understood that God’s grace was sufficient for her.

Mary was not the only person whose faith Gabriel tested. Before Luke spoke of the announcement to Mary, he tells us of the

announcement to Zechariah. Comparing the two may add to our wisdom concerning the value of Mary as a role model.

In announcing to Zechariah that his elderly wife, Elizabeth, would bear him a son to be named John, Zechariah, in disbelief, posed the question, “How shall I know this for I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years?” (Lk. 1:18) In contrast to his reply to Mary, Gabriel rendered him mute, “because you did not believe my words” (Lk. 1:20).

When the angel said, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you,” (Lk. 1:35) Mary understood that this was not done by man’s power, but by God’s. She does not doubt God’s power whereas Zechariah, High Priest that he was, did not see that God’s power was greater than his circumstance of age.

Mary’s fidelity, as expressed by her humble “yes,” is also a direct reversal of Eve’s infidelity, expressed by her prideful “no”! Adam, embracing Eve’s “no,” brought sin to the world. Jesus, embracing Mary’s “yes,” brought salvation to the world. Consequences for both of them, and for the world, can be valuable meditation for each of us.

Imagine what our modern worldly wisdom to Mary nowadays might be:

“Mary, you are being very foolish to continue this pregnancy, abortion is the only answer.”

“You are little more than a child yourself.”

“You will not be able to cope with the responsibilities of a child.”

“You need time to develop and to become educated.”

“Your family is not supportive.”

“Your chances for a successful relationship with Joseph are nil; he will always question your fidelity.”

“Quickly, consummate the betrothal, then Joseph will think it’s his.”

“Why did you not use birth control? Plan ahead, next time.”

“You say this is a miracle pregnancy? You need a psychiatric evaluation.”

REFLECTIONS

- Like Mary, are we not also chosen to fulfill God’s particular plan for us knowing He will give us the graces we need?
- When we read the scriptures do we embrace His Word like Mary did and say, “Be it done to me according to your word”?
- Do we believe, as Mary did, that by following God’s plan, we will be blessed?
- Are we able to trust and make the leap of faith, especially when faced with conceiving God’s precious gift of life?
- Will we trust in God’s power as did Mary, or will we limit ourselves to seeing only man’s power and man’s limitations as did Zechariah?