Mary’s Fiat

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph of the house of David. The Virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus.” And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be since I have no husband?” And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God for with God, nothing is impossible.” Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.”

This response of Mary “Let it be” means “FIAT!” in Latin. This tiny word holds a lot of meaning.

First of all, Mary did not politely say to the angel, “No thanks. Why not check with the girl next door?” She did not qualify it with a more measured response, “Let it be done to me according to your word as long as it does not hurt too much, ask too much of me or hurt those I love.” Nor did she say, “And why now, God? Couldn’t you have waited until Joseph and I were respectfully married and settled? Your timing is way off with this plan!

Mary’s fiat is holy because it is through her act of humble submission as a 14- or 15-year-old girl, her openness to God’s plan, that the Son of God makes His entrance into human history.

Mary was used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. “The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith.” Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her “the Mother of the living,” and still more often they say: “death through Eve, life through Mary.”

Mary is an example to us of prompt, unreserved obedience and a strong faith in the Lord.

A Personal Call

1. God takes the initiative. God initiated the relationship with Mary. Luke’s Gospel tells us that “in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth...and he came to her and said ‘Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.’” (Luke 1:26, 28). We notice the very human details of the Annunciation. It happened in a specific place, to a specific person. So it is with God’s plan. He doesn’t call us en masse. He calls each one of us personally, because he loves each of us as a son or daughter. Although we sometimes talk about ourselves as “seeking God” or “finding God,” it’s really more accurate to say that God is seeking, or looking for, us. God finds us rather than us finding God.
2. Our seeking or finding God really has more to do with opening ourselves to recognize that God is already there, and always has been,

3. He may whisper to our hearts through His Holy Spirit, or he may speak through a chosen messenger, His angel. But it is God who always initiates and then awaits our response. Mary, in her selflessness, was open to the angel’s visit. She recognized who was speaking. She listened, received and responded. In so doing, she demonstrated the framework of all authentic spirituality, that is, God initiates a relationship with us and we respond in surrender to Him. This dynamic leads to a dialogue, a conversation, a way of life.

Pope John Paul II gave a beautiful Homily about Mary’s faithfulness and Fiat in 1979 (Mexico City Cathedral, Jan. 26, 1979)

“Our faithful Virgin. What does her faithfulness mean? What are the dimensions of this faithfulness? The first dimension is called “Search”. Mary began lovingly to seek the deep sense of God’s plan in her and for the world when she asks, “How shall this be?”

The second dimension of faithfulness is called Reception, acceptance. Mary’s “How shall this be?” is changed to a fiat, “Let it be done. I am ready. I accept”.

The third dimension of faithfulness is Consistency: to live in accordance with what one believes. But the most exacting test is duration, that is, the fourth dimension: Constancy. It is easy to be consistent for a day or two, but it is difficult to consistent for one’s whole life. Mary’s fiat at the Annunciation finds its fullness in her silent “fiat” at the foot of the Cross”.

Mary’s Fiat has taken on another perspective for me in my zeal for the pro-life movement...mention Drake Circle, Birthchoice Because of Mary, no life is too small or ordinary or a “mistake” because every life is infused wit the divine. We may not realize what work God is doing in us, but Mary gives us hope that we might be transformed through new life as she was.

Prayer to End Abortion

O Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of us all, we turn to you today as the one who said “Yes” to life. “You will conceive and bear a Son, “the angel told you. Despite the surprise and the uncertainty about how this could be, you said yes, “Be it done to me according to your word.” Mary, we pray today for all mothers who are afraid to be mothers. We pray for those who feel threatened and overwhelmed by their pregnancy. Intercede for them that God may give them the grace to say yes and the courage to go on. May they have the grace to reject the false solution of abortion. May they say with you, “Be it done to me according to your word.” May they know the peace that comes from doing God’s will. Amen.”
4. Practical applications as women and mothers

God has invited each of us as women and mothers into this intimate love. This kind of intimacy with a living, loving God is the meaning of Mary’s Fiat and her way of life. When we embrace Mary’s Fiat and make it our own, we allow the Love that Mary bore in her body to be incarnated in us, too.

In living a surrendered life we not only transform ourselves, but we also participate in the manifestation of God’s love to others.

When we “surrender”, we submit ourselves to God’s will. This submission is not passive or “whatever happens” “que sera sera, what ever will be, will be” Spiritual submission is ACTIVE! It is joyfully praying to God, acknowledging His goodness and love for us in “the grand scheme” and allowing His will to be done.

This act of submission came to light recently when our middle daughter was applying to college. 

So Surrender yourself to God. Surrender, not give up! Here’s a first step: simply open up your hands as you pray. Try it during the Our Father as you pray “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” Pray for the grace to desire what God desires. Or try opening up your hands when you sing the Great Amen at the end of the consecration of the Mass. Let that gesture be your way of praying Whatever you want God, that is what I want — help me to desire it.”

James 4:7-10

Read more

"Let It Be," the Beatles song written in 1969:

lyrics by Paul McCartney; John Lennon, composed

When I find myself in times of trouble,
Mother Mary comes to me,
Speaking words of wisdom:
Let it be.

I wake up to the sound of music;
Mother Mary comes to me,
Speaking words of wisdom: Let it be.

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