



The Nourishing Vocation Project Near and Now:

Holy Tending: the Art of Paying Attention - Mary

Warm-up Question

*When have you been confused by a message or news you just received?
Give examples*



["Embraced by Grace"](#) by [Lawrence OP](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

She was much perplexed by his words and pondered

Read [Luke 1:26-38](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, is six months pregnant. This is a pregnancy that no one expected due to Elizabeth's age. After many, many years God answered Elizabeth's prayer with a resounding "yes!" Now, God has sent an angel to tell Mary that she too will soon be pregnant. This is news to Mary since she is still a virgin. When the angel sees that Mary is perplexed by the information that she will become pregnant, the angel attempts to explain how it will happen. The Holy Spirit will come upon Mary, and she will conceive in her womb a child whom she is to name Jesus. It is at this point that the angel reveals that her cousin Elizabeth is currently six months pregnant. Upon learning this, Mary accepts what the angel has told her and agrees to God's will.

Mary, like many of us, is confused by unexpected news that is brought to her by a stranger. She doesn't know this angel, and yet she is expected to take the angel's word that this information is from God and is God's will for her. Mary was a young teenager engaged to an adult and now she has to deal with an unplanned pregnancy where God is the father. Pondering and being perplexed are both fitting responses to this situation.

There are many times in life where we are greeted with unexpected and surprising news. Timing is rarely ideal for the changes that occur in our lives. And yet, if we remain stuck in old patterns of behavior, we may miss out on wonderful opportunities to live out what we thought was impossible. God calls us to unknown places and extraordinary experiences. With God, nothing is impossible for those who believe and trust in the triune God. Faith is what gets us through the inconceivable times while we wait for God to move the mountain – whatever the mountain may be.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you identify with Mary?
2. Describe a time that it was hard to believe that God understood what you were going through?
3. What helps you when you are perplexed?
4. Where do you typically focus your attention when you receive unexpected news?
5. How do you think Mary would tell her own story?
6. Who do you turn to when you feel overwhelmed?
7. How do you respond when you think God is asking too much of you?
8. When do you feel grounded spiritually?
9. How do you celebrate the good things that happen to other people?
10. What helps you pay attention to God's call upon your life, even when it is unexpected?



Activity Suggestions

Draw a picture that represents someone sitting with all the questions they have when the task at hand is beyond their comprehension.

Rewrite the scripture reading in the form of a poem.

Speak a blessing of divine focus over yourself and/or those in your group, your family, or your friends.

Prayer Concerns

Those who are afraid or overwhelmed, mothers of all ages, those waiting for miracles

Closing Prayer

Direct the ponderings of my heart, O God, toward where you call me to pay attention. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

