

Today we remember the birth of Mary, the greatest woman to live. While reflecting on this Gospel, I realized that really over the course of her life, Mary must have had many opportunities to be afraid and could have questioned many of the challenges and moments which she faced in her life. Certainly, much was demanded of her as she journeyed throughout life with the Lord.

For example, throughout the four Gospels, we read about how an angel appears to her proclaiming that she is to be the Mother of God, we witness Mary having to search frantically for her lost Son for three days and then getting a response that must have made her wonder at what God was working in her life, how she stood at the foot of the Cross as her Son dies the humiliating death of a criminal.

How many opportunities to turn to fear . . . To give up on faith . . . To lose hope . . . IT NEVER HAPPENS! IT NEVER HAPPENS!

Mary, despite all the darkness that surrounds her, the challenges of life, the massive temptations to despair, turns to God in faith EVERY SINGLE TIME! Mary, by her response of faith, can be described as one who chooses faith over fear.

When we think about the example from today's Gospel, we notice the great faith and trust that Mary has in God. During this time, a woman that

was found to be pregnant without a husband would be exposed to great shame by the surrounding culture. If the general public was to find out about the pregnancy, she could have experienced great embarrassment and brought those around her, her family, her friends, herself, great shame. Despite this potential for humiliation and shame, this challenging request, Mary says YES!

Mary, in her great fiat to God, her great Yes, pours out her trust and faith in God and chooses to bear the Savior of the world. And not only Mary but Joseph also, in his docile acceptance of the workings of the Spirit, is able to say “Yes” when God calls him to great faith. I cannot help but wonder if after the angel has explained the situation and the events that have taken place in the life of Mary, the courage of Mary’s own response, helped inspire Joseph to have courage in saying his own “Yes” to God and taking Mary as his wife and Jesus as his foster child.

In our own lives, we face many challenging moments in which darkness seems to pervade our lives, tempting us to despair. We need only think of a few examples: a recently lost a job, a mother and father who have lost a child, a life-changing accident or illness, an argument with friends or family, speaking the truth. All of these can be challenging moments that can lead us to fear, shame, and despair. On the other hand, these moments can bring about a grace that can only be foreseen by God. When we embrace the moments of trial, bearing the suffering and the cross, we know that in some mysterious way, God will bring about beautiful fruit: peace and grace.

This is what we celebrate today in the birth of Mary: the woman who chose faith over fear and through this brought about the Son that would destroy all fear, sin, the devil, and death, through His very own death and acceptance of the will of the Father. We celebrate and rejoice that faith will always triumph over fear, that grace will overcome all darkness. Every time we say “yes” to the will of God, we participate in bringing about the reign of God in some great and mysterious way. May the “Yes” of Mary, the “Yes” of Joseph, and the “Yes” of Jesus, inspire us all to say “Yes” to the Lord every day of our lives!