

4th Advent B 12-18-11

Well, I checked in on the Virgin Mary's Facebook page to see how things are going. Let's see here....

"All is calm, all is bright...great pregnancy...baby due in a week ...it will be great to have God in the family...I'm so glad to be perfect ...this afternoon, will pose for statues and medals..."

Do you imagine that Mary lived an easy and clear life? That she knew the plan, and that knowing and doing God's will was easy for her? Was Mary really just a statue, play-acting at being a person?

Consider: she is just 13, a teenager, when she has a religious experience, a vision. "God has chosen you to become pregnant—now. Your child will be called the Son of God. Yes? Or no?"

Did Mary immediately respond, "Let it be done to me according to your word?" Or, maybe some lines are missing. Perhaps she struggled for days or weeks to say "yes"—in part because for her to be pregnant and not yet with Joseph would put her at risk of being killed for adultery—by stoning. Perhaps in the dark of night Mary cried, "God, please choose someone else. Your will is hard! Give me strength!"

Do you suppose Mary had an easier life than ours? When she and Joseph bring the baby to the Temple, old Simeon warns her, "a sword of sorrow shall pierce your heart."

When Jesus is twelve and his parents find him in the Temple, he responds "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's

business?" Already Mary has begun to lose her son; already he no longer belongs to her.

Joseph dies at some point, then Jesus leaves home to be a wandering teacher and miracle-worker. Mary is home. How often does Jesus visit? How does she have enough to live on? We don't know.

Mary may have worried about her son's mental health, because in Mark 3:21, we read that his family "set out to take charge of him, convinced he was out of his mind."

When his mother and family members ask to see Jesus, he responds "whoever does the will of my father is mother and sister and brother to me." Mary is a mother who sees her son moving away from her. *She has lost Joseph, and now she is losing Jesus.* Sometimes mothers have to just let go and give their child to God.

Mary never forgets her response to the Angel Gabriel: "I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." 35 years after she first utters those words, Mary stands on Calvary, beneath her Son's lifeless body, and prays them again. "God, your will is hard...may it be done to me according to your word."

Mary is not a statue. She is a woman of great faith, profound trust, immense courage, unconquerable strength. Like us, she walks by faith, not by sight. Mary is our hero.

Our best Christmas is not the latest iPhone, the perfect outfit, the fun party. Christmas really happens when you and I cry, "God, may my life also bring you to world. May your will also be done in me!"