

Sermon preached by Lyn Jenkins for the Festival of Mary

Why is Mary so special? Why is she unique?

Why do we attach so much importance to her?

Mary became the first Christian when she consented to be the mother of Our Lord. As mother of Our Lord~ Mary is closer to Jesus than any other human has ever been and ever will be.

She was the one who bore him in her womb, the one who nurtured him, the one who even gave her life for him -not in the sense of dying, but when the angel Gabriel visited Mary, Mary said 'Yes'. And that changed the course of her life for ever. Little did she then know what that implied.

Mary put God first.

She put her trust completely in him and placed her life in his hands. She could have lost the security of a life with Joseph.

For Joseph could have abandoned her when he found that she was pregnant. What if he had done so?

What would Mary have done?

But God's will must be done -and whatever the consequences Mary knew what her answer to the angel must be.

She risked the comments and stoning given to anyone who became pregnant out of wedlock.

She could not have understood fully what God was asking other but her faith dictated her reply.

So Mary is an example of one who implicitly trusted in God and was obedient to his will.

Jesus, when he lived on earth, owed a great deal to his mother Mary.

He probably owed a lot to Joseph too. For both Mary and Joseph played their part in bringing up the child Jesus.

But the Bible tells us very little about Joseph.

We believe he was a lot older than Mary, who was only a young teenager when Jesus was born. We do know Joseph was still around when Jesus was twelve, but after that there is no mention of him alive. Mary kept close to her son throughout her life.

She was there at the wedding in Cana ---again we can see her trust - this time trust in her son. '*Do whatever he tells you*' she says when the wine ran out.

Again she did not understand but she knew Jesus would come to the rescue.

I believe Mary and Jesus were very close ---there is often a special bond between mother and son and there certainly was this bond between Mary and Jesus.

We see this most poignantly at the end of Jesus' earthly life.

At the Naming of Jesus in the Temple, Simeon told Mary that a sword would pierce her soul.

I wonder how much, if ever, she dwelt upon those words. But they came into fruition when she saw her beloved son on the cross.

Mary could have stayed away at the end -after all, there was no more she could do. Jesus was condemned and sentenced to this violent death. It must have been horrific for her to watch.

And yet, there was something she could do. She could not get her son down from the cross, but her being there must have been a great source of comfort, strength and support to Jesus. At one moment he felt abandoned by his Father- God, the Father *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* The feeling did not last as Jesus abandoned himself into God's hands. But Mary never deserted him. She loved him to the last. But Jesus also loved her.

And part of his agony must have been to see his mother suffering.

And so we have that touching episode when Jesus in his indescribable suffering thought about the future of his mother.

It shows that Mary was everything to Jesus and he wanted the best for her. John, one of his young disciples, was there with Mary.

John must also have been feeling very lost for he too was a devoted follower of Jesus, the one we believe was called 'the beloved disciple'. Some sources even say John was a cousin of Jesus.

Jesus, in his great agony as he looked down at these two distraught people said these moving words.

I quote, *'When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother "Woman, here is your son". Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother ". And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home '.*

In those words he made sure that his mother would be looked after, and so would John.

Jesus wanted the best for his mother.

And so Jesus would want us today to remember his mother.

For Mary was special to Jesus and I'm sure Jesus would want Mary to be special to us.

Having said that we must remember that Mary was fully human.
But no other human has borne Jesus in their womb and given birth to him. It is not surprising that Mary knew Jesus better than anyone else ever did. So, I find, asking for Mary's prayers makes a lot of sense.
She would know how to pray more than anyone else, more than any of the other saints, more than Peter, or Paul or even John.
Mary must have been a great inspiration to the rest of the disciples.
She took her place with them when Jesus left his earthly life, as we heard in our second reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Much of Mary's work goes unnoticed. She does not go around preaching great sermons; she is not seen to perform healing miracles but in the Gospels, she was always there for Jesus, and in the Acts of the Apostles she was there for the disciples.

Mary did not claim attention for herself.
In the icons of the Orthodox Church which depict Mary and Jesus, we see Mary pointing to her son.
This is the supreme role of Mary.
Mary leads us to Jesus - she shows us the way. By her example, we can draw closer to him.
She displays Christian qualities -including, humility, faith, love. She does not run away from suffering.
And she is a model of family life ---a devoted and loving mother.
Many Christians try to downgrade Mary believing only Jesus deserves recognition. But in so doing they are losing a vital link to the Son.
And if Jesus took such care in making sure his mother was cared for, surely he would not want his mother to be ignored by his followers of today.

The Old Testament reading from Isaiah could easily have been the words of Mary.

Mary first and foremost rejoiced in God and praised him with her whole being. She certainly did this when she gave herself completely to him in consenting to bring Jesus into the world. We have so much to thank Mary for. For we owe so much to her.
And her influence continues this day as she offers the prayers of each one of us to her beloved Son, Jesus.

Hail Mary.....