

## MARY, OUR MODEL

(LUKE 1:39-56)



In the Hebrew scriptures, there are certain types of stories which have a definite structure. One of these patterns is known as “Birth Annunciations”. This means that the child to be born is of particular significance.

Luke has two of these narratives, which concern the forthcoming arrival of John the Baptist and Jesus. The final element in such a structure is the giving of a sign. The purpose of a sign in this context is to guarantee to the person who has received the message that they were not dreaming: it is to confirm the reality of their experience. The sign given to Mary by Gabriel during her visionary encounter is that her elderly cousin Elizabeth is (unexpectedly) pregnant. So Mary’s visit to Elizabeth is not an act of charity but part of a literary pattern: she goes to confirm the angel’s communication.

The unborn John the Baptist makes his first announcement of the coming of the Lord by leaping for joy in his mother’s womb. Elizabeth greets Mary with a beatitude for the one who “believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.” Mary responds with her song, the Magnificat. In this scene, many of the themes which run through the Gospel of Luke are stated: the importance of believing (or trusting) in the word of God; the Lord’s concern with those who are on the margin of social and religious society; the reversing of human social structures.

This is the central of the five scenes in Luke’s Infancy Narrative, in which the two mothers and two children are brought together. They then separate, with Mary going home and leaving the stage to Elizabeth and Zechariah. ■

## REFLECT

The doctrines of our faith are not concerned only with God, Jesus and Mary, but also tell us something about ourselves. The Gospels are focused on the person of Jesus and his meaning, so the other characters in the story are seen in their relationship to Jesus, and the evangelists are not interested in them for themselves apart from Jesus. That is why there is little information about Mary: the last mention puts her in the company of the disciples in Jerusalem before Pentecost; we have no idea from the scriptures as to what happened to her after that, and none at all about the end of her life.

It seems clear that the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which we are celebrating today, reflects the ascension of Jesus in glory into the presence of God. We see in Mary someone who trusted in God’s word, who accepted her part in God’s plan, and whom Luke held up as the example of the true disciple, one who listens to God’s word, meditates on it and puts it into practice. This, unlikely though it may seem, shows Mary’s true importance as a model for the rest of us: we cannot imitate Mary in her physical motherhood of Jesus, but we can follow her example in regard to the word of God. ■

## LEARN

The giving of a sign in regard to the birth of a significant person in God’s plan is an integral element in the narrative.

Mary’s visit to Elizabeth is to confirm the sign, and therefore the reliability, of the angel’s message.

The Infancy Narratives, the first two chapters of the Gospel versions of Luke and Matthew, are primarily theological.

They set out the main themes which will run through the Gospel accounts.

## DO

Notice an infant in their parent’s arms or in a pram. Think of Mary and her part in bringing the Son of God into our world.



## SAY

**Mother of Christ,  
star of the sea,  
Pray for thy children,  
pray for me.**

(John Lingard)

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Let us all rejoice in the Lord,  
as we celebrate the feast day in honour of  
the Virgin Mary,  
at whose Assumption the Angels rejoice  
and praise the Son of God.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God,  
who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary,  
the Mother of your Son,  
body and soul into heavenly glory,  
grant, we pray,  
that, always attentive to the things that are  
above,  
we may merit to be sharers of her glory...  
Amen.

**FIRST READING** *Apocalypse 11:19; 12:1-6. 10*

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse.  
The sanctuary of God in heaven opened, and  
the ark of the covenant could be seen inside it.  
Now a great sign appeared in heaven; a  
woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the  
moon, and with the twelve stars on her head  
for a crown. She was pregnant, and in labour,  
crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. Then  
a second sign appeared in the sky, a huge red  
dragon which had seven heads and ten horns,  
and each of the seven heads crowned with  
a coronet. Its tail dragged a third of the stars  
from the sky and dropped them to earth, and  
the dragon stopped in front of the woman as  
she was having the child, so that he could eat  
it as soon as it was born from its mother. The  
woman brought a male child into the world,  
the son who was to rule all the nations with an  
iron sceptre, and the child was taken straight  
up to God and to his throne, while the woman  
escaped into the desert where God had made a  
place of safety ready. Then I heard a voice shout  
from heaven, "Victory and power and empire  
for ever have been won by our God, and all  
authority for his Christ."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalms 44

Response:

On your right stands the queen,  
in garments of gold.

1. The daughters of kings are among your  
loved ones.

On your right stands the queen in gold of  
Ophir.

Listen, O daughter, give ear to my words:  
forget your own people and your father's  
house. (R.)

2. So will the king desire your beauty:  
he is your lord, pay homage to him.  
They are escorted amid gladness and joy;  
they pass within the palace of the king. (R.)

**SECOND READING** *1 Corinthians 15:20-26*

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the  
Corinthians.

Christ has been raised from the dead, the  
first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death  
came through one man and in the same way  
the resurrection of the dead has come through  
one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all  
men will be brought to life in Christ; but all  
of them in their proper order: Christ as the  
first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ,  
those who belong to him. After that will come  
the end, when he hands over the kingdom to  
God the Father, having done away with every  
sovereignty, authority and power. For he must  
be king until he has put all his enemies under  
his feet and the last of the enemies to be  
destroyed is death, for everything is to be put  
under his feet.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Mary has been taken up into heaven;  
all the choirs of angels are rejoicing.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL***Luke 1:39-56*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Luke.

Mary set out and went as quickly as she  
could to a town in the hill country of Judah.  
She went into Zechariah's house and greeted  
Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard  
Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb  
and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.  
She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women  
you are most blessed, and blessed is the fruit  
of your womb. Why should I be honoured with  
a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the  
moment your greeting reached my ears, the  
child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is  
she who believed that the promise made her  
by Lord would be fulfilled."

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the  
Lord  
and my spirit exults in God my saviour;  
because he has looked upon his lowly  
handmaid.

Yes, from this day forward all generations  
will call me blessed,  
for the Almighty has done great things for  
me.

Holy is his name,  
and his mercy reaches from age to age for  
those who fear him.

He has shown the power of his arm,  
he has routed the proud of heart.  
He has pulled down princes from their  
thrones and exalted the lowly.  
The hungry he has filled with good things,  
the rich sent empty away.

He has come to the help of Israel his  
servant, mindful of his mercy

– according to the promise he made to our  
ancestors –  
of his mercy to Abraham and to his  
descendants for ever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months  
and then went back home.

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

May this oblation, our tribute of homage,  
rise up to you, O Lord,  
and, through the intercession of the most  
Blessed Virgin Mary,  
whom you assumed into heaven,  
may our hearts, aflame with the fire of love,  
constantly long for you.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

All generations will call me blessed,  
for he who is mighty has done great things  
for me.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Having received the Sacrament of salvation,  
we ask you to grant, O Lord,  
that, through the intercession of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary,  
whom you assumed into heaven,  
we may be brought to the glory of the  
resurrection.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.