

Today in the church, we celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of all the beliefs in our faith, the virgin birth is one of the most difficult to accept. But the birth of Jesus Christ is not the essence of the celebration of Mary (and we can leave that point for nearer to Christmas time!).

The choice of Mary as the mother of Jesus, the Son of God, is the celebration today. Mary was a young girl brought up and living in Nazareth. She would have had a simple upbringing, probably no formal education but would have been schooled in how to run a household, to cook and clean and to nurture children. Exactly the same as many other young girls at the time.

So why was Mary chosen? Well, she seems to have been faithful and obedient. Look at her response to the Angel Gabriel. No fear is described in the gospels (I am sure if a large angel appeared from God to me I should either scream or hide behind the sofa while I recovered!), she listens to her destiny, makes an astute observation about her virginity, and then accepts the message "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.". That ability to accept God's calling, irrespective of the danger to ourselves, is what makes Mary special for me. There are few like it – some of the prophets of the Old Testament fought God's calling before finally accepting it. There was no fighting the destiny for Mary, and yet following God's call meant facing disgrace, alienation and possible stoning. None of that is mentioned in the record of the Angel's visit.

Saint Ignatius tells us 'There are very few people who realise what God would make of them if they abandoned themselves into his hands, and let themselves be formed by his grace'. Mary is a perfect example of this.

I wonder what might be achieved if we allowed ourselves to simply follow God's calling without concern for ourselves, our families, or for other worldly pressures?

The Post Communion Prayer for the Festival of the Blessed Virgin Mary contains these words:

'strengthen us to walk with Mary the joyful path of obedience and so to bring forth the fruits of holiness'

But, you may find this thought more fruitful:

'I ask for the grace to trust myself totally to God's love.' (taken from today's prayer in Sacred Space).

Whichever is right for you, my prayer today is that we can all learn from Mary's obedience to God's Word and become more trusting and accepting as we grow in faith.

Have a blessed (and cooler!) week.

Linda