



Fact of Faith

Mary: A Model for Us All

Mary's devotion to God and willingness to say "yes" to him is something Catholics learn very early in faith formation. And Mary's deep faith and dedication to doing God's will can be an inspiration for anyone searching to fulfill the will of God, no matter their vocation. The US bishops explain in the pastoral letter, *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*, just how Catholics can use Mary as a guide, especially youth, consecrated religious, single women devoted to God, spouses, and parents. The bishops wrote, "No one ever followed Jesus so well as Mary his Mother. No one can help us more, by her example and by her intercession" (*Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*, no. 130).

Mary and Youth

"Young people, adolescents in particular, will find in Mary the totally unselfish person, the brave young woman who could face and accept the hidden future bound up with being Virgin Mother of the Messiah" (no. 143).

While we don't know for sure, Mary was likely no more than 14 when her future husband was chosen by her parents—an older man named Joseph. For youth discerning their future, Mary serves as an inspiring example of responding to what God asked of her with great love.

In addition, many young people have dreams of making a positive impact on today's society where too many still suffer from the effects of poverty, turmoil, and fear. Is there a better example than Mary, who became an instrument of God, to bring light to all the world? As the bishops noted, "Only those men and women will make an impact on society and change the world for the better, who make themselves powerful, effective instruments of God by lives of faith, hope,

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and love, giving themselves completely to God in order that in and through them he may accomplish his great designs" (no. 144).

Mary and Religious Life

"Again, it is the loving faith of Mary that makes her a perfect model for the religious. She is greatest among the 'lowly and poor of the Lord,' whose trust in him brings the abundant harvest" (no. 126). For those who have been called to serve the Lord and bear witness to the Kingdom of God, Mary is a guide. The dedicated men and women in consecrated religious life renounce and leave behind personal possessions and the prospect of married life and allow their talents to be given in service of the Lord. "These

religious, who have consecrated their lives to the Church, know from experience the tension between their vocation of prayer and the demands of the apostolate. Mary was the perfect contemplative, totally committed to 'the one thing necessary,' yet fully attentive to the needs of others, e.g., Elizabeth, the Cana couple, the disciples praying at Pentecost" (no. 123).

Mary and the Single Life

The US bishops wrote in the 1973 pastoral letter that Mary could serve as a model for women who live a single life, as she was consistently unselfish in her service to others. Devoted single women, "share in the spiritual motherhood of the Mother Jesus, and like her, find



true happiness and fulfillment in doing God’s will” (no. 145).

Mary and the Spouses

Many Catholic wedding ceremonies include the presentation of a bouquet to Mary in the church. In this way, the couple invites Mary to take part in their married life, the bishops write. “Christian marriage is a sign of the union between Christ and his Church. Man and wife in mutual love, and in the children they welcome from God and care for, are a witness to the world of love of God and of their fellow men. The offering of the bride’s bouquet at Our Lady’s

statue is an American Catholic custom that invites the Blessed Virgin into the life of the newlyweds” (no. 134). And, after the wedding is over, Mary, the guardian of life, can serve as a reminder to couples to remain open to the gift of life and remain dedicated to one another with conjugal chastity.

Mary and Parents

“Mother of the Holy Family at Nazareth, Mary is mother and queen of every Christian family. When Mary conceived and gave birth to Jesus, human motherhood reached its greatest

achievement” (no. 131). Mary teaches us to value and love all life from conception until death. She also serves as a model for instilling the Catholic faith into children in the home, which is evident in the story of Mary and Joseph bringing Jesus to the temple. Parents are called to make their homes a domestic church, and what greater example of that is there than the Holy Family, headed by Mary and Joseph? As the bishops wrote, “Mary is the Queen of the home. As a woman of faith, she inspires all mothers to transmit the Christian faith to their children” (no. 137).