
"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 288

dear betrothed Virgin...

The day of your betrothal must have been one of the happiest days in your life. According to your ancestral, religious and cultural traditions girls were married off pretty early, around the age of twelve or thirteen, some six or so months before the wedding.

Like every young girl who gets betrothed, you too must have engaged yourself in delving deep into dreams of a rosy, romantic married life. The days and weeks before the wedding were and are rightly known for dreaming. Weren't you too doing the same?

But alas! With just one "Hail Mary!" from Gabriel, all those delightful dreams were dashed. The initially shocking, and eventually surprising, revelation: "you will conceive and you will bear a son....." did it! You were deeply disturbed by that greeting of the angel. That "Hail Mary" set in motion a gale of panic shattering your dreams and sweeping away your castles in the air, built in the wonderland of your imagination.

After the initial shock, and collecting your innate courage, you asked for clarification with a straightforward and confronting question: "How will this be.. since I am a virgin?" In those days, it was rather unheard of for a Jewish village girl of your age to raise questions or to place objections or to seek explanations, especially in matters of importance. It was almost unbecoming of a girl. You were expected to be submissive and obey!

Yet you had the courage to ask. You did question. You did seek a clear answer. After availing yourself of not only an explanation but also an illustrative example involving the aged Elizabeth you opted to give your consent. And thus you said "Yes"!



Subsequent experience brought you to realize that, although that was a huge decision it was relatively easier to make than actually living out its implications in the hard and heroic situations of everyday life! Your life was never the same after you heard that "Hail Mary" and said your "Yes".



After the angel Gabriel disappeared from your sight the seriousness of the situation and the severity of the aftershocks began to appear. You must have anguished over the thought of being seen as allegedly unfaithful. For days and nights you must have been groping in your confused mind, trying to grapple with the gravity of your predicament. All the while the miracle of the Most High was deep within you, enjoying cosy comfort.

In the following days and weeks, you must have been haunted by frightening thoughts like: "How could I ever tell my parents?" "Will they ever believe me?" "How could I ever face my fiancé, let alone tell him?" "Even if I bring myself to tell him, would he ever believe me? Could he ever accept it?" You must have wondered: "Won't they corner me and confront me to come out with the 'truth' and demand that I name the man responsible for making me pregnant?"

Dear betrothed Virgin, in the subsequent days you must have had a terribly worried mind within a tired and tense body. For a moment at least, you must have felt frozen with fear at the probability of an impending punishment for allegedly being unfaithful.

You must have known for certain, as per the Jewish traditions, that an unfaithful fiancé found pregnant without the knowledge of her spouse, could face severe punishment – be disowned or abandoned, be sold as a slave, or driven to prostitution, be dragged to the court, or even stoned to death! The Most High saw to it that none of those dreadful events ever happened to you, nor to the holy embryonic life within you, because you had found favour with the Lord!

In later years it became clearer. This was only your first "Yes", clearly the most important "Yes" of your life. But it was only the beginning in a seemingly endless series of many big and small "Yes"s that you had to keep on saying!

We humans have to say many a "Yes" as we journey along in life. We need to say many minor as well as major "Yes"s. When I glance at my own itty-bitty little life, there was many a "Yes" I had to say for the last close to seventy years.

Unlike your "Yes" which was always firm and strong most of my "Yes"s have been tampered with and tattered by my selfish and sinful ways. As I journeyed along, my "Yes's" were often badly bandied and bruised and at times buried in the wayward and wanton ways of a sinful life! With a contrite heart I want to keep renewing, refreshing and repeating my "Yes"!

Dear betrothed Virgin continue reviving, refreshing, and renewing my drooping spirit so that I am fit to keep repeating my "Yes". Along with you I want to repeat it for the rest of my life:

*"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!
Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus!"*

May this salutation keep on giving me strength and perseverance to keep repeating and renewing my own "Yes" everyday of my life!

Joe Kallani sac [NA] – Cochin – INDIA
07.12.14
joekallani@gmail.com



*“You have heard that you shall conceive and bear
a son,
...not of man but of the Holy Spirit.
The angel is waiting for your answer...
If you consent, straightaway shall we be freed...
by one little word of yours in answer shall we all
be made alive!*

*Answer, O Virgin, answer the angel speedily...
speak the word and receive the Word;
offer what is yours and conceive what is of God;
give what is temporal and embrace what is
eternal”*

St Bernard
Divine Office – 20 Dec