

The Blessed Fruit of Mary's Womb Blesses You

We bow our hearts in prayer: O Lord Jesus Christ, You humbled Yourself and came under Your own Law so that You could exalt us through Your obedience. Grant that we may humbly acknowledge Your gracious presence among us in Word and Sacrament and receive You as the Virgin Mary did saying, **let it be to me according to your word.** Amen.

Our text for meditation today is...

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "**Blessed** are you among women, and **blessed** is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And **blessed** is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." (ESV)

These are Your Words, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Would you like to know an interesting but obscure fact?

John and Jesus were relatives long before Mary and Elizabeth.

1,500 years earlier, Judah's great-great-great grandson, Amminadab, had two children, a son named Nahshon and a daughter named Elisheba.^{Exodus6:23}

Nahshon was the great-great-great grandfather of King David, the ancestor of Jesus.^{Matthew1:4-6}

Elisheba married Aaron, the Levite, who later became Israel's 1st High Priest.

She bore Eleazar and his brothers. Eleazar was John's ancestor.

You see, there's a reason for all those genealogies in Scripture.

Would you like to hear another interesting, but obscure thought?

Our Gospel lesson, shares a number of interesting parallels with the account of David bringing the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem.

In 2 Samuel 6 we hear that David, like Mary, arose and went into the Judean hill-country.

David went to retrieve the Ark, that earthly vessel which bore the presence of the Lord.

Due to their negligence in following God's directions for transporting the Ark, Uzzah, one of the men helping to move the Ark, was struck down dead when he touched it.

David, in great fear, cried out, "**How can the ark of the Lord come to me?**"

David then left the Ark there, under the protection of a man named Obed-edom.

While the Ark remained in his house for 3 months, the Lord greatly blessed him and all his household.

In our Gospel lesson, Mary was, in a sense, an ark,

an earthly vessel bearing the presence of the Lord.

Where David fearfully, yet longingly asked "**How can the ark... come to me?**"

Elizabeth is joyful and exclaims, "**Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**"

Elizabeth was then blessed to be in Jesus' presence for the next 3 months while Mary stayed with her, probably until the birth and circumcision of John. But it didn't take her all those months to recognize the Lord's blessings.

Immediately she pronounced a three-fold blessing:

"**Blessed** are you among women,
and **blessed** is the fruit of your womb!
And **blessed** is she who believed...."

This blessed-ness that she announced was not something merited.

Mary did not earn or deserve the great distinction of bearing the Christ-child.

God knows that her ancestral genetics were not naturally purer than anyone else's. Instead this blessed-ness is all gift, freely given out of God's love and grace.

And so, like her son John later would, Elizabeth, being filled with the Holy Spirit, points us directly to Jesus. He is the reason for the blessings.

Mary herself recognized this.

How easy it would have been for her to be tempted to think that she was someone great, that, really, it is only natural that God chose her, because of her piety and devotion.

After all, no one else in the entire world or throughout time would ever have the distinction of being the "Mother of the Lord," of bearing God in her womb.

And how tempting would it have been for you, if you had been in her place, to look back at Gabriel's announcement to you and think of your response,

"**Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.**"

and pat yourself on the back, that you came up with such a noble response; especially after hearing how Zacharias did with Gabriel's announcement to him.

As if it had been her personal decision to believe God, rather than His gift of faith to her.

Now who's to say she didn't struggle with these temptations.

And I bet there were loads of other temptations, like doubting God's wisdom in impregnating a virgin girl before marriage, which according to His own Law under normal circumstances, would have been punished with stoning.

Or, while she recognized the beauty of God's gift of children and felt privileged to bear, not only a human child, but THE Son of God, did she have fear of actually giving birth, since it is pretty painful and at times life endangering?

Or later on, as Jesus going through His terrific-tuos,

while looking around at the other mothers trying to manage their terrible-tuos toddlers, perhaps she was tempted to think that it was her style of discipline & home management that made Jesus such a terrific kid.

Perhaps she was tempted to the other extreme as well, feeling constant fear and pressure to raise God's Son correctly because God the Father would no doubt be watching.

Could you relate to any of those proud thoughts or faithless fears or worries?

I am sure there are an infinite number of other sins that you share with Mary as well,
because you share with her the same corrupted flesh passed down from Adam and Eve.

Now there are some who declare her to have been perfect in this life, even from conception.

But that wasn't her own thought.

In fact she even professed her sin as she magnified the Lord...

she called Him God HER Savior.

Not a Savior from economic poverty, or social inequality, or lack of academic opportunities,
but the Savior from sin; the Savior of sinners, like her.

And notice that she doesn't declare that He WILL BE her Savior... at some future point,
but that He IS her Savior, even now, in her womb.

She probably never would have imagined His crucifixion as His saving act,
but neither she was ignorant of the prophecies calling her Son and Savior,

the Lord our Righteousness. Jeremiah23:6,33:16

Even now, in her womb, Jesus was earning her salvation, and not only hers, but yours also.

Even now, He was keeping all of God's commandments.

He was innocent of sin; not innocent like we think of all babies, according to civil infractions,
But innocent before God of any spiritual offense or guilt. He "knew no sin" of His own.

This would be true all the way to the cross, where He served as the "Mercy Seat" of God,
where His righteous, innocent blood was spilt for you, on your behalf.

There's a certain blessed-ness that only Mary could have, that which was announced by Elizabeth,
"**Blessed** are you among women, and **blessed** is the fruit of your womb!

But as was said before, this blessed-ness was a special gift given by God.

It served not only Mary or Elizabeth or John in whose presence He came,
but it serves you even now, even today, into whose presence you have come.

While it is difficult for us always to understand this because we can't see Jesus with our eyes,
yet He says, **For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.**

Jesus is present among us here now, even here in this gymnasium,

Matthew18:20

not only according to His spiritual divine nature,

but also according to His physical crucified, risen, and ascended human nature.

Where previously, you might have asked with David, fearfully yet longingly,

being mindful of your sin and guilt, "**How can the ark... (How can God...) come to me?"**

You can join with Elizabeth in joyously exclaiming, "**Why is this granted to me that...
my Lord should come to me?"**

For He comes to you now, not to strike you dead, but to forgive and strengthen you.

He comes in humble, physical, earthly vessels, even now:

through His Word, faithfully spoken by His ministers,

and through the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar,

where *He bestows on you His crucified and risen body and blood,*

conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary... for you and your salvation.

**“Blessed are you who believe that there is a fulfillment
of what is spoken to you from the Lord.”**

Soli Deo Gloria