

Mary, Mother of God

The shepherds found Mary and Joseph and the infant in the manger as they had been told by the angel. They made all this known; they were the first witnesses of the Good News. Faith confirmed by encounter. God had broken into our reality in a remarkable way. Even Mary seemed to be affected by their testimony and kept this, reflecting on what the shepherds had to say, “in her heart”. This is what we do when God gives us remarkable faith-inspiring “coincidences”. We pray, or we sense something, and then wait to see a fulfilment. It is something worth sharing, worth pondering and thinking about. God makes Himself evident, proves His presence to us in these fulfilments.

The infant is named on the eighth day. According to the Jewish custom, a boy is named by his father on the day of his circumcision, the eighth day after birth. In this way he was brought into the covenant of Israel, one of many moments when Jesus’ life was in harmony with the Law of Moses. The name Jesus, or Yeshua in Hebrew, literally means “God saves”. So, the very name of Jesus tells us what he does. He “saves” us, that is, he keeps us from going bad, from being lost, and even more he rescues us from vain, empty, meaningless lives, from blind alleys, false Messiahs and false heavens that are only prisons. The name Jesus had been communicated both to Mary by the angel Gabriel and to Joseph in his dream.

St. Paul summarizes all this story with a short, sweeping phrase: “In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, born of woman - Mary – (thus elevating woman), born under the Law of Moses (as we have seen) to ransom those under the Law (and those not) so that we might receive adoption as children of God.” The confirmation of this is the sending of the Holy Spirit which changes our very identity so that we call the God who created the universe by the most intimate name: Abba, Daddy. Again, we see confirmation. We have proof in that we are becoming more and more the sons and daughters of God. We are no longer orphans in the world. We belong to Him and love Him because we are loved. We are heirs of eternity.

Mary, whom we honor today is the exemplar of this salvation, and she is the human being through whom this salvation enters the world. Today we honor her as the Mother of our Savior Jesus. She is the model of our faith and shows forth the very salvation that we seek. She follows God in a fearless way. She considers the fulfillments, the proofs that God provides. We all need them. In our humanness we falter and doubt. Let us like Mary ponder these things in our hearts and surrender our will to God’s: “May it be according to your word.”