

August 15, 2021

To the good people of St Mary:

What a wonderful saint to be named after and how wonderful that you can gather again, in person, on your matronal festival. I look forward, one day before too long, to being with you at the parish and coming to know you all. For now, it is my pleasure to send you written greetings.

Today, as you celebrate your matronal festival, and as you celebrate being back together in person after the long exile that has been COVID, I invite you to think about your matron saint: Mary.

Sometimes the Christian tradition forgets about Mary right after Christmas, but the calendar and the Bible remind us that while, yes, Mary was the *theotokos*—the God-bearer—she was so much more.

Yes, it's the Christmas story in which she plays the biggest role, but she is a constant presence throughout the gospels. She's at Jesus' first miracle, the wedding at Cana. She's in Capernaum when Jesus is teaching. She is also, heartbreakingly, at the foot of the cross. It is because she witnessed the death of her own son that one of the names we give her is *mother of sorrows*.

But as much sorrow as she faced and saw, the death of Jesus is not the end for Mary. After the Ascension of Jesus, Mary is in the upper room; she is there at Pentecost for the coming of the Holy Spirit. For Mary, it seems, had stores and stores of strength. She says yes to the angel Gabriel as a teenager and then, 30 some years later, at Pentecost, she says yes again. Yes, to the Spirit, yes to the resurrection, yes to the continued work of being God's servant in God's world.

Today, as you celebrate your matronal festival, and as you celebrate being back together for worship, I invite you all, like Mary, to say yes to the Spirit. To say yes to the particular work that God is wanting to birth in and through you. To know that the Spirit has been with you since your beginning, has seen you through miracles and sorrows, and is not finished with you yet.

May your worship together be Spirit-filled and hopeful; and may the spirit of Mary—the God-Bearer, the mother of sorrows, and the one who shows us the way—be with you this day and for evermore.

Blessings,



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