

## **Homily for the Feast of Saint Mary the Virgin and the Baptism of Dylan Morgan Futter Duhamel**

The Reverend David I. Giffen

I speak to you in the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

*Hail Mary, full of grace. Our Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

You know, there was a time, not so long ago, when an Anglican Priest would not have dared to say those words from a pulpit in an Anglican Church – probably afraid of being run out of town.

Since the Reformations of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and likely even before, the Church has continued to struggle with its understanding of Mary, an understanding which has changed, divided, evolved, and grown.

But still, many Christians today struggle with Mary's role in the life of the Church. As the Mother of God and an Intercessor for some, and with heavy importance upon the historicity of the Immaculate Conception and Virgin Birth for others, Marian theology continues to be a hot button topic for many. But no matter where we reside theologically on the place that Mary holds in Christian life, the most important of roles in which Mary played during her life was the role as Jesus first disciple.

At first this may sound strange, asking how a mother could possibly be the disciple of her child. But scripture tells us that Mary is the only of Christ's disciples who was with Him from the moment of his

conception, through his life, witnessing his death for us upon the cross, and who was still present when the Spirit was poured out upon the Church at Pentecost.

Christians can debate the titles she has been given, and the role she has in heaven, but Holy Mary, mother of God, or not, the mother of our Lord and Saviour was most certainly, devoted Mary, disciple of Christ. So on the eve of her Feast Day, we celebrate the beginning of Mary's discipleship. We celebrate the day on which God asked the most unlikely of people to prepare the way for the birth of Christ. We remember that God asked an unwed teenage girl to bring the Incarnation to life.

In saying "yes" to God, Mary would in turn say "yes" to a life of sacrifice, joy and devotion that would see the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ in our world.

But it is probably too simple to end here and say that Mary said "yes" to God, and so should we. For it seems quite obvious that although the task God asked of Mary seemed immense, even still, Mary could not know the life of sacrifice and pain that she was agreeing to.

In our modern world of individual rights and freedoms, we place a heavy importance on notions such as 'informed consent.' The reason we are required to be a certain age when we get married, vote, or sign a contract is because we as a society have deemed that to be able to make major decisions in our lives – we must first have the ability to give 'informed consent.'

It is a notion that encourages us to believe that we have the ability to know the future, before deciding on a course of action. It is a notion that encourages us to believe that if we didn't know what was to come, we are not responsible for the decisions that we have

made. But like many notions of the modern world, I often wonder if they are not simply a creation of our corporate imagination.

Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that we don't have the ability to reason or weigh good from bad – I just don't think that idea of 'informed consent'; the ability to say 'yes' or 'no' to something, can ever be truly tied to an impending outcome.

Did Mary (or do any of us for that matter) actually know what we are saying "yes" to, when we say yes to God? More importantly, would Mary (or would any of us) still say "yes," if we did?

Would Moses have said "yes" to God if he had been told that upon returning to Pharaoh to ask for his people, twelve plagues would descend upon Egypt and then he would be left wandering the desert for forty years? Would young couples 'in love' say "yes" to God in marriage, if they truly knew the specific hardships they would encounter upon their lifelong commitment together? Would baptismal candidates and their families say yes to Christ, if they truly knew the commitment to suffering and sacrifice that will be rendered?

I realize that I am not painting the prettiest picture of why we should say "yes" to God, but if our relationship with God is to be deepened, and if our relationship with one another is to be strengthened, we must first acknowledge that life will be difficult, but that we still walk the path to which we are called.

God chooses the most unlikely of us for a reason. God chose Mary, an unwed teenager; Joseph, a lowly carpenter; and a baby, fragile and unable to fend for himself. God asks the most unlikely of us, because God knows that we are broken, and God knows how to make us whole. God chooses the most unlikely of us and then God

binds us together – under some of the most unlikely of circumstances, God chooses to make us one.

Mary was asked to face an impossible task, to carry God's Son to birth in a world that would not understand her pregnancy. But God would not leave her alone to face a misunderstanding world; God would give her the support of a spouse and a partner. And with Joseph by her side, as they followed an unknown path, they would together be given the birth of our Saviour.

God *has*, *does* and *will* ask big things of us, and we do not always know the path that he is leading us on, but God does not ask us to face to the world alone. God gives us his Church, God gives us the support of one another, and most importantly, God gives us our Saviour.

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Today, we will baptize Dylan Duhamel – the perhaps not so little one, who today, will become the newest member of the Body of Christ. In light of everything I have said today, about not knowing what life will bring, what hardships or joys will come his way, Baptism may seem like an awfully big commitment.

That is because it is.

But God does not ask Dylan to face this world alone.

Leslie and Todd have been blessed by the birth of their son, and today, they will commit themselves to raise their son to know and love God, amidst God's people. They have chosen Tanja and Perry to act as extensions of themselves, calling upon them to do all in their power to support and uphold Dylan in his life in Christ. And they

have brought Dylan home to this community of faith, where we will promise to this 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation of Futter family members that we will pray for Dylan, and we will support Dylan, and that we will walk with him and his loved ones, as the family of Christ.

God does not ask us to say “yes” alone – God asks us to say “yes” alongside one another.

As we gather around the Font today, participating in the birth of a new creation, let us remember the waters which made each of us new. Let us remember that “in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” As Dylan is born again by water and the Spirit, let us too rise to new life.

For God has called upon the most unlikely of his creation, and God has made us one. And so we rejoice in the Spirit, we walk forward to the unknown of our lives, and with a resounding chorus, we say as one, “Yes” to our Lord and our God.

Thanks be to God.