

Mary sang,

*I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.
God took one good look at me, and look what
happened--*

*I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!
What God has done for me will never be
forgotten,
the God whose very name is holy, set apart
from all others.*

*His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before him.
He bared his arm and showed his strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.*

*He knocked tyrants off their high horses,
pulled victims out of the mud.*

*The starving poor sat down to a banquet;
the callous rich were left out in the cold.*

*He embraced his chosen child, Israel;
he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.
It's exactly what he promised,
beginning with Abraham and right up to now.*

The Message, Luke 1: 46-55



She has been known by many titles including the Queen of Angels, Holy Mother, Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace, Queen of Heaven, Virgin Mary, Virgin of Guadalupe, Miriam of Nazareth, Daughter of Zion, Second Eve, Queen of all Saints, Theotokos (*Mother of God*), Handmaid of the Lord, Mater Dolorosa (*sorrowful Mother*), Model of Faith, Mater Gloriosa and the Mother of Jesus.

Scriptural references regarding Mary are known as the "Ten Evangelical Virtues." They are as follows: Most **Pure** (*Mt 1:18, 20, 23; Luke 1:24,34*), Most **Prudent** (*Luke 2:19; 51*), Most **Humble** (*Luke 1: 48*), Most **Faithful** (*Luke 1:45; John 2:5*), Most **Devout** (*Luke 1:46-47; Acts 1:14*), Most **Obedient** (*Luke 1:38; 2:21-22; 27*), Most **Poor** (*Luke 2:7*), Most **Patient** (*John 19:25*), Most **Merciful** (*Luke 1:39, 56*), Most **Sorrowful** (*Luke 2:35*).

Background

Research has shown she is second only to Jesus as Christianity's most popular subject of religious art¹. The Koran speaks of Mary as the virginal mother of Jesus. The Catholic Church has some 23 separate festival days to celebrate her life. During the 14th century Black Plague, Mary was venerated in popular piety as mediator of the mercy of Christ. Among the popular devotions that developed during that time was the rosary (a string of beads originally consisting of 150 Hail Mary's in tribute to the 150 Psalms).

Some of the most beautiful cathedrals in the world are named after her (including Reims, Chartres, Rouen, Amiens, Nîmes, Evreux, Paris (*Notre-Dame*), Bayeux, Sées, & Toulon). Today, the world's largest church (accommodating 200,000 people) is dedicated to Mary².

Christopher Columbus showed his devotion to Mary naming his flagship, the **Santa María**. The entire crew offered daily prayers to Mary for guidance and protection.

In 1518, Martin Luther's commentary on the "Magnificat" (Luke 1: 46-55), pointed out that the Gospels praise Mary by calling her (*eight times*) the Mother of Jesus. Later he preached; "[*she is the*] highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ . . . She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures" (*Christmas Sermon, 1531*).

The reformed leader, Zwingli, wrote, "I esteem immensely the Mother of God," and, "The more the honor and love of Christ increases among men, so much the esteem and honor given to Mary should grow."

Reflections

So what do we make of this young teenage girl who was asked by God's messenger to carry the Savior of the world? We know she was from very humble beginnings. What she lacked in earthly possessions, she made up for in a special gift from God, *wisdom*. Early church leaders like Augustine maintained that wisdom "pertains to the knowledge of eternal things" and Clement of Alexander said wisdom was "knowledge of things both human and divine."

Wisdom does not come from just reading books, acquiring knowledge, or through the passing of years. Wisdom is a gift from God that enables us to see and understand God's presence in the world about us. True wisdom enables us to understand and do God's will for us. It takes wisdom to appreciate the words of Mary's song (*cited above*) known as "The Great Magnificat." It speaks to the significance of the Lord's coming for all God's people. The overthrow of the tyrant does not come through rebellion of the oppressed in violence but through God's transformation of the world through the birth of a humble child born in Bethlehem. This is a peace that surpasses the world's understanding

We are called to be like Mary. Mary understood what it meant to be servant of the Lord. She understood that she was blest by sharing God's blessing with others. We too must be filled with the love and light of Christ. Unless we help deliver this message of hope; lives will never change. Jesus transformed the lives of others one person at a time. So must we.

Ironically the name Mary means "one who is obstinate or never changes". That just goes to show us the way God transforms things and turns the world upside down. Mary was chosen to be the mother of Jesus Christ; the world's greatest change agent! Lives are changed every second of every day by his enduring message. One solitary birth has changed the world forever!

Strength Finders talent: Consistency

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252203/consistency-theme.aspx>

Those with consistency like to see balance in life. Mary certainly demonstrated this desire in the words of "The Great Magnificat" (above) wherein she sang; *"He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold."*

This was a fervent prayer that God would send a savior meant for all people. Not just the rich and powerful but also those who were poor or without powerful connections. Jesus came into the world

for all of us. His message is open to all who would follow; high or low, rich or poor, woman or man: we all matter to God!

Enneagram connections: Nine

Mary comes across as a very healthy nine. They are known for their love of peace. Its only appropriate this would be the mother of the Prince of Peace.

Mary also tried to avoid conflict when she encouraged her son to be more cautious when speaking (or challenging) religious leaders who were not fulfilling their responsibilities to God or the people.

Mary also demonstrated a healthy connection with her six arrow when she repeatedly took steps to protect Jesus. She also demonstrated this strength when she sought to protect his body. She was at the crucifixion where Jesus appointed someone to look out for her (Apostle John).

Mary also had a strong link to the three arrow when she was present at Pentecost and helped contribute to the success of the early church.

<https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-nine>

*For that fair blessed Mother-maid,
Whose flesh redeem'd us; that she-Cherubin,
Which unlock'd Paradise, and made
One claim for innocence and diseased sin.
Whose womb was a strange heaven for there
God clothes himself, and grew,
Our zealous thanks we pour. As her deeds were
Our helps, so are her prayers; nor can she sue
In vain, who hath such titles unto you*

John Donne, *Anglican priest and poet (1572-1631)*

¹ Wheeler, Marion. "Her Face: Images of the Virgin Mary in Art" 1998.

²*Our Lady of Peace* in Yamousoukro, the capital city of the Ivory Coast in West Africa. At 525 feet in height it is the world's largest church [including all those not specifically commemorating Mary]! It was built from 1987-1990 at a cost of at least \$150 million; and was consecrated by Pope John Paul II in September, 1990. The basilica seats 7000 people, an additional 11,000 standing in the nave, 30,000 on the plaza leading into the sanctuary, and more than 150,000 on the esplanade within the corridor of columns.