Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





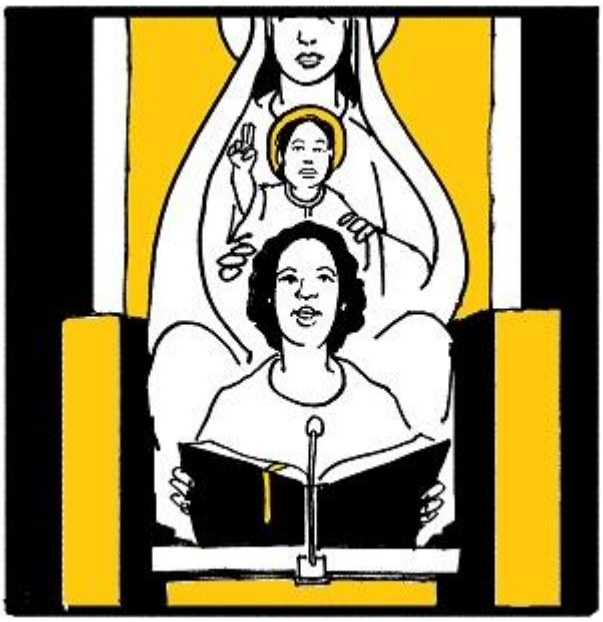
by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

September 7, 2021
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“Of her was born Jesus who is the Christ” (Matthew 1:16).

The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mic 5:1-4a; Rom 8:28-30; Matt 1:1-16, 18-23

Our belief that God became human in Jesus is so central to our faith, it is protected by other key beliefs regarding Mary, his mother. She is a virgin yet she conceives, but not by Joseph, her husband, but by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is truly human, born of Mary, and truly divine, the Son of God. By extension, church doctrine and tradition protected the uniqueness of Jesus by celebrating the uniqueness of Mary, proclaiming that, in preparation for her role as the mother of God, she was herself conceived free of original sin. Mary’s birthday is celebrated as the sacred precursor to the birthday of Jesus, the Word Incarnate.

Without challenging these credal cornerstones, could a simpler Gospel account have also proclaimed Mary's holiness in a way more accessible to human understanding? It might have blessed her marriage to Joseph, their nuptial union, her birthing experience and motherhood, the crucial parenting of Jesus she shared with Joseph. That story might have as easily and powerfully told how God is with us in the flesh and in the world. Our questions about who she was are moot to history but critical to theology, which deals in mysteries greater than we can grasp.

What is important is that we have models of holiness that make living in the world both sacred and possible, and spiritualities that affirm how intimate Mary and Jesus

really are to our daily struggles and challenges. What happened for Mary is meant to happen for us. By baptism we, too, are free of original sin in preparation for lives full of grace. By receiving God's Word, we conceive Jesus in our hearts and give birth to him in the world. If we live the pattern of his life, death and resurrection, we will share both his humanity and his divinity. By living Mary's Magnificat, we sing a song of justice, confidence and joy that will be heard on earth as it is in heaven.

The Mary who welcomes us to her birthday party is a Jewish girl fully alert to the will of God, a daughter of the Holocaust, the universal mother of the *Pieta* holding her dead child. She is the mother who convened the disciples at Pentecost to prepare them to be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. She is the mother of all the promises God has made to us about the triumph of justice and the Beloved Community we will share in eternity. We celebrate you, Mary, by imitating your "Yes" to God and by making it our own.

Advertisement