

□ Reading time: 4 min.

Inhabited by God, like Mary, we see ourselves as called and sent

Mary arose and went with haste (Lk 1:39). Few words, yet full of meaning. In these simple and decisive gestures, the inner structure of a heart that has truly let God inhabit it is revealed. Mary's is not just any departure; it is the response of a recollected life, of a soul that, because it has learned to listen and to discern, then manages to respond. Mary, having lived the experience of the annunciation, does not stop to process what has just happened to her. Mary does not close herself in the intimacy of her own extraordinary and profound experience, keeping it to herself. On the contrary, she lets herself be shaped and guided by the Word. And she sets herself in motion towards the other.

Mary's is a spiritual movement; she has welcomed the Word, and now it is the Word dwelling within her that directs her towards her neighbour. Whoever truly loves as a consequence of feeling loved by God forgets themselves and puts themselves at the service of their neighbour. Mary teaches us that the availability of the heart is not an accessory virtue, but the way in which God's love takes shape in the life of those who believe in Him.

Availability: stepping out of a narrow vision

Inhabited by God, like Mary, we see ourselves as called and sent. Mary's action contrasts with a vision of life built on an unavailable "I", closed in on itself. When we decide only to observe the world from a narrow vantage point, we risk coming to the conclusion that our opinion contains the whole truth. It is the age-old temptation, reducing reality to what we have already seen, measured, and planned. Our way of thinking and seeing becomes the sole and exclusive measure.

Mary shows us that openness of heart is first and foremost an emptying of one's own selfishness. When one remains closed, instead of letting oneself be led by charity, one loses that movement of the heart which receives God's gift only to then

draw near to one's neighbour. True availability of the heart is not a human decision. It is, above all, a grace to be invoked, freely received, guarded, and exercised every day. We do not go towards the other in a full, free, and joyful sense unless we let God be alive in our hearts. Unless it is He who makes us open, opening our eyes wide to that which surpasses our small and wretched human logic.

Emptying oneself is the first form of love

In a culture like ours, there is the subtle risk of self-referentiality, that of believing that one's identity is built by looking at oneself, as if in an ever-shrinking mirror. Mary bears witness to another way of looking at life. She repositions her whole life on the presence of the Word in her heart and, then, on Elizabeth's need. A choice that places the neighbour's need as a calling born from the relationship with God. And this is why she sets off in haste towards those in need.

True availability has at its roots the courage to question oneself, to renounce oneself, even when this appears as a loss. It is not a matter of flaunted generosity, but of an inner freedom that comes from having discovered that I can only be myself by giving myself to the other in a radical way. Here, the open and available heart is not the conquering of a trophy, but abandonment to the Father's will.

Not a gesture of goodness, but obedience to God who dwells in the heart

Mary does not go to Elizabeth merely because, humanly speaking, she believes her elderly cousin needs help. The visitation to her cousin is not a gesture of goodness; it is the presence of the Son, who in the womb is conforming the Mother to Himself. Mary's journey towards Elizabeth is the very mission of God taking the form of a journey towards the other.

Mary's visit is a mission that is the fruit of the Son's coming within her. Because when Jesus truly becomes part of our lives, everything we are and do flows from this single source. From the personal encounter with Christ springs the mission.

Unconditional availability: beyond results

Faced with this free and generous choice of Mary's, our desire to imitate her is marked by a very subtle but ever-present temptation, that of wanting to see what kind of results our choices have. Mary, who immediately sets out on her journey, communicates to us the decision of a heart that is already full and does not seek safety and certainty outside itself. Because the measure of the mission and its success, lies in her living relationship with the Word dwelling within her.

Mary, icon of the free heart - Word, faith, and charity

Cardinal Martini offers us a brief but dense and essential reflection: the **Word** is the seed, **faith** is the womb that welcomes, **charity** is the fruit that is born. Mary is the woman who lived this dynamic in its fullness. With humility she welcomes the **Word**, with **faith** she arises in haste, with **charity** she gives herself. Her "going in haste" communicates that gesture of charity which reflects a free and liberating heart, illuminated by the Word that sustains her faith.

An open and available heart is not a sentimentally good heart. It is a heart that has learnt to dwell in the tension between the proclamation received and taken on, and the brother and sister who are waiting; between inner grace and the road to be travelled, between the mystery of God and the concreteness of human need.

Mary teaches us that we must not wait until we have understood everything before setting out.⁴⁰