

Ask Fr James

What are the biblical origins of Marian Spirituality in the Catholic Church?

No one had a deeper relationship with Jesus than his mother, Mary. She was present with Jesus from the annunciation, the birth until the foot of the cross. From on top of the cross Jesus said; "Woman, behold, your son!". Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' (John 19:26-27). From that moment, Mary became the mother of all disciples and her life became a model for all Christians. The catholic Church's devotion to Mary is mostly a reflection from her life as the Bible tells it and a fulfillment of Mary prophecy; "henceforth all generation will call me blessed" (Luke 1: 48).

Christians are people who have responded to God's loving invitation to follow Jesus. The Blessed Virgin Mary shows us how to do this. How? First, when the angel told her she is the chosen instrument of God's salvation. She welcomed Jesus as the best news ever; "let it be done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). This fiat would make her the most blessed woman on earth. Again, on her visit to Elizabeth, her cousin, as baby John leapt for joy and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, Mary sings the Magnificat joyfully in praise of God (Luke 1: 46-55). When we adopt Marian spirituality, we are learning from the school of Mary on how to follow God's will in accepting Jesus into our lives.

We learn the joys and sorrows that comes our way believing like Mary did that "may God's will be done." Like any mother, Mary experienced joys over her son Jesus; (the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Presentation, and Finding of Jesus in the Temple) and she also experienced sorrows over her son Jesus; (The Agony in the Garden, The Scourging at the Pillar, The Crowning with Thorns, The Carrying of the Cross, The Crucifixion). Mary had troubles during her life on earth. She experienced grief, loss and anguish. When faced with difficulties and hardship, we often despair, sink into a state of self-pity and indulge in the feeling of helplessness because we do not acknowledge the redeeming work that has already begun in our lives. Mary teaches us how to praise God no matter in what situation we find ourselves in. When she composed and sang the Magnificat as a hymn of praise in response to God's mighty deeds, she was faced with her problems too but she believed God.

A popular devotion to Mary is the Rosary. The rosary is a prayer mediating on the life of Jesus and Mary. For instance, when we pray the joyful mysteries, we call to mind the joys of the Virgin Mary and seek her intercession as queen of heaven and earth. And when we pray the sorrowful mysteries, we contemplate her acceptance of God's will for our salvation. The purpose of the rosary is to aid our contemplation of the events outlined as mysteries and as they relate to our own experiences. The recitation of the Rosary and participation in Marian pilgrimages to shrines or processions are sure ways of gaining spiritual fulfillment. In the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary and we seek her intercession as Comforter of the afflicted.