

11: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29 Rom 16:25-27 Lk 1:26-38

“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”

Luke 1:26-38

Two things seem clear when God chooses someone for a really important role. God usually chooses someone weak and insignificant -- and God chooses that person to die.

As a young girl Mary would not have been taught to read -- young boys, yes, but not young girls. Ancient peasant cultures counted females, including wives, among man's possessions, along with slaves, oxen and donkeys. The selection of Mary's husband would have been entirely her parents' affair. She could not refuse their choice. As a female, Mary would be allowed to enter the synagogue, but had to remain in the back or in the balcony behind a grill. If perchance she did learn to read, she was not allowed to read the Torah in the synagogue service. But God chooses the weak and insignificant to do God's great work.

Mary was also chosen to die. There are many ways of dying. Mary did her dying in shame and pain, as a refugee. God called Mary to the shame of becoming an unwed mother...all of this asked of a girl of twelve or thirteen. And, these deaths were just the beginning. She would become the mother of an executed criminal. As a widow she would watch her son die a cruel painful death reserved for the worst of society.

Mary had no role in Jesus' public life. Hers was a hidden life, dedicated to nurturing and forming her son. But Mary, as God's secret, became one of the most influential, celebrated women in history... This secret, weak, unlettered Mother of God, who is our mother, is the wisdom of God, the power of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, God's call to Mary mirrors God's call to each one of us. In baptism God calls us, despite our insignificance, weakness and inadequacies, to "give birth" to God's compassion in our own Nazareths and Bethlehems. In that call, God asks us to "die" to our own doubts, fears, comfort and safety in order to embrace and be embraced by the new life of Jesus' resurrection both in this life and in the next.

**As Pope Francis has encouraged us: "Mary sustains our journey toward Christmas, for she teaches us to live this Advent Season in expectation of the Lord." (Pope Francis, Angelus, 8 December 2013)
As our mother, she accompanies us in all seasons of our life.**

If Mary, the young unmarried pregnant teenager, can believe the incredible event that she is about to be part of, if she can trust in God asking her to embrace her role in the great story of salvation, then the most ordinary of us can believe in what God's asks us to do as well.

Dear Mother of Guadalupe, teach us, form us to believe that nothing is impossible for those who trust God.