

EXPECTANCY: A FRUIT OF BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT

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Mother of God Prayer Meeting
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This fall the theme has been the graces that come from baptism in the Spirit – praise, joy, interior revelation of Jesus. Tonight: *expectancy*. This talk is based in large part on last week's prophetic words.

Mary as our model

Mary the Mother of God was the first person baptized in the Holy Spirit: "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." In her, it was such a powerful grace that all it took was to be in her presence and others would be baptized in the Spirit too! "She entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk 1:40-41).

What is expectancy? A disposition of profound hope and readiness for God's action, an attitude of joyful waiting. Expectancy is *not*, "I can't wait till this trial is over," "Things are bad now but hopefully they'll get better later on." It's a realization that God is doing something marvelous *now*, even if it is unseen. Expectancy is a permanent disposition. It's the other side of the power of praise – I trust God and rejoice in him and thank him for what he is doing and will do, because it all comes from his boundless love.

Mary is the model of expectancy. Her disposition of total expectancy was the setting for the greatest mysteries of God's intervention in the created realm: the Incarnation of the Son and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Mary knew how to wait upon the Lord with her whole being. Why didn't the Holy Spirit come right after the resurrection of Jesus? Why did the disciples have to wait for 50 days? Nothing seemed to be happening. They were just hanging around praying and trying to avoid the Romans. *God knew they were not ready*. Nothing seemed to be happening externally, but profound change and growth was taking place interiorly. Why is a baby not born right after conception? There is a hidden growth and development.

What was Mary doing during those times? She was pondering. "She kept all these things in her heart" (Lk 2:19, 51). She was pondering God's promises, reading Isaiah and the prophets, turning the words over in her heart until they became part of her, trying to understand what God was doing. That's what God wants us to do!

Three qualities of expectancy: repentance, openness, steadfastness.

Repentance

Why do we lose expectancy? Disappointment, changes in the script, self-protection, sin.

The reason John the Baptist came in preparation for the Messiah: to soften the hard hearts, clear away the ruts and lumps so that people would be ready for God to act.

Baptism in the Spirit brings this grace: seeing our sinful state with great clarity, yet with a sweetness and joy that comes from experiencing forgiveness at the same time. We can repent precisely *because* we have already been forgiven and our sin has already been dealt with on the cross. What first struck me at MOG: I had never heard people talk so openly about their sin, but with such expectancy!

A repentant heart is not: "I'm a loser, I'm a lout, I'm lower than dirt," but "How much greater is God's holiness than I realized! How far short I fall! How much deeper is my sin and bondage than I anything I could ever rectify on my own! But how fully and completely He has dealt with it! How great is His mercy!"

What binds us during the day? Judgments, discouragement, lies can accumulate in our minds and before we know it, we get plundered. We lose sight of God's plan. We need a continual returning to Christ, to let him free us. "What would it take to return to joy?"

Return to joy: repentance, forgiveness, blessing. Last week's prophetic words. If I've lost my joy, it's usually because I need to repent.

Openness

Letting go of our expectations. Israel had certain expectations for the Messiah, which they didn't realize were very worldly (a political Messiah). They were based on prophecy, but a particular interpretation of prophecy which was man-centered. Based on these expectations, Jesus was a disappointment!

It took the purity of heart of faithful Jews like Simeon, Anna, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary to allow God to refashion and purify their expectations so they would be entirely centered on God. Based on these purified expectations, Jesus was the greatest Good News the world has ever known!

God's plan is always going to be somewhat different from our expectations, but always better, once we have eyes to see!

Steadfastness

Steadfastness is what is needed in the process of God making his people ready, because He tests our expectancy. Israel had to have great patience as they awaited the Messiah.

As Mary awaited the birth of Jesus, she did not deflect from her trust in God's word. "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Lk 1:45). She was not dismayed by the looks she must have gotten as a woman pregnant out of wedlock, the snide comments. She didn't doubt God's word when the script changed – nine months pregnant and she had to make a rough three days journey, give birth in a cave with no family members around. She didn't spend her time worrying, "What if this baby miscarries because of the trauma? What if he has a birth defect? The angel said it would be a boy, but what if it's a girl?" When things seemed to go not according to plan, she clung to God's promise with total simplicity.

Expectancy for Mother of God Community

Do we lack expectancy for our lives? Do we lack expectancy for the community? God wants to restore our expectancy. Mary was anything but passive as she waited for her Son. God does not want us to passively take what comes, but to very actively, receptively ready ourselves for the *new things* he wants to do.

Council retreat in January, community retreat in February – please join with us in prayer.

Are we expectant at the prayer meeting? Do we come with ready hearts? Hearts that are in tune with what God has been speaking to us lately? Hearts that are free of judgments, distractions, or any hardness that would hinder the Holy Spirit's work? Hearts that are open to whatever new things God wants to do?

Consider bringing a notebook and pen to the prayer meeting. Not to write down every word, but to take note of what strikes you, what the Holy Spirit might want you to keep in your heart and ponder.

Mary not only exemplifies the expectancy of the Church, but enables it. Israel needed her for the Messiah to come. The disciples needed her presence for the Holy Spirit to come. Part of the significance of the Consecration yesterday: we need her presence to have the expectant, ready dispositions that God wants for us.

Questions

1. Lord, what are you calling me to let go of in preparation for what You want to do:
 - a. in my personal life?
 - b. in my family?
 - c. in my work?
 - d. in the community?
2. Read and ponder Lk 1:26-2:20 and Acts 1:4-14, 2:1-4. What was in Mary's heart as she waited for the birth of her Son? What was in her heart as she waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit?
3. If I am one of those who made the consecration to Jesus through Mary, what am I expecting in a new relationship with her?
4. What is my expectancy for Mother of God Community? *Lord, what is Your desire and plan for this body?*