

Greatly Troubled

- The Greek *diatarachthē* can mean “greatly perplexed.” Mary is greatly perplexed by the greeting (Bock, 110).
- The Greek *diologizeto* translates as “she was pondering” and portrays her as giving some ongoing reflection to the greeting (Bock, 110).
- Our word “dialogue” stems from this Greek root. In other words, Mary enters into an interior dialogue with the Word. She carries on an inner dialogue with the Word that has been given to her; she speaks to it and lets it speak to her, in order to fathom its meaning (Pope Benedict, *Credo*, 62).
- While she does not understand, she “dialogues” with the Word.

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For Us

- Mary entered into “dialogue” with the Word. God wills that our prayer be a dialogue and not a monologue.



Monologue



Dialogue

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For Us

- As we will see, Mary serves as a wonderful model for us. While she is presented with things beyond her understanding, she avoids the following:
 - Demand answers – “Why don’t you answer me Lord?”
 - Doubt – “I need to see some sign to trust you.”
 - Presumption – “Lord, use me for I have many gifts.”

Like Mary, God wills that we become “good soil” where the Word of God can produce much fruit. If we are in “dialogue” (listening and speaking) with the Word, we can interiorize it so as to better understand its meaning.

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How can this be?

- Like Zechariah, Mary does not understand how such a plan will unfold (cf. 1:18 – “How shall I know this?”). However, unlike Zechariah, Mary does not ask for a sign.
- What causes Mary to ask her question, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” Fulton Sheen phrases it this way, “How shall this be, seeing I know not man?” (*The World’s First Love: Mary, Mother of God*, 85).
- For nothing about the angel’s announcement should have perplexed Mary – whose betrothal to Joseph was already a legally binding marriage – unless she intended to forgo ordinary sexual relations even as a married woman (Hahn & Mitch, 19).

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Church Fathers

Augustine: In being born of a Virgin who chose to remain a Virgin even before she knew who was to be born of her, Christ wanted to approve virginity rather than impose it. And he wanted virginity to be of a free choice even in that woman in whom He took upon Himself the form of a slave (Jurgens, Volume 3, 71).

Jerome: Holy Mary, blessed Mary, mother and virgin, virgin before giving birth, virgin after giving birth! I, for my part, marvel how a virgin is born of a virgin, and how, after the birth of a virgin, the mother is a virgin. (Oden, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary*)



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Perpetual Virginity

- Mary’s perpetual virginity can be examined in three parts:

· **Virginitas ante partum:** Mary’s conception of Christ

· **Virginitas in partu:** Mary’s giving birth to Christ

· **Virginitas post partum:** Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ

Augustine: A Virgin conceiving, a virgin bearing, a Virgin pregnant, a Virgin bringing forth, a Virgin perpetual (Jurgens, Volume 3, 30) (cf., CCC 510).

CCC 499: The liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the “Ever-virgin” (Sacred Tradition)



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Perpetual Virginity

Virginitas ante partum: Mary's conception of Christ

- **Matthew 1:18:** When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:26-27).

Virginitas in partu: Her giving birth to Christ

- Christ's birth did not diminish His mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it (LG 57). Mary's bodily integrity was preserved. In giving birth, Mary did not experience:
 - Pains of childbirth (cf. Gen. 3:16)
 - Ritual impurity (cf. Lev. 12:2)



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Perpetual Virginity

Virginitas post partum: Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ

- Some argue that Matthew's use of "until" (Gk. *heos*) implies that Mary had relations following Jesus' birth (Mt. 1:25).
- Two examples from Scripture demonstrate that the opposite state of affairs does not necessarily come about:
 - Saul's daughter Michal was childless to day she died (2 Sam. 21:17-18). Did Michal have children after she died?
 - For [Christ] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25). Does Christ cease reigning after His enemies are defeated?

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Perpetual Virginity

- Like her Immaculate Conception, Mary's perpetual virginity is neither explicitly affirmed nor denied by Sacred Scripture
- The Church's belief is grounded in the Tradition of the Church. For example, one can find it defined in the following:
 - Lateran Synod 649 (canon 3)
 - Pope Paul VI's *The Credo of the People of God* (14)
- **Fittingness.** Some argue that by embracing virginity perpetually, Mary fully accepted the mystery of her virginal motherhood. Her perpetual virginity allowed her to completely devote herself to her Son and His saving work.

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Perpetual Virginity

- If Mary vowed to remain a virgin prior to the Annunciation, then why was she betrothed to St. Joseph?
 - **Protoevangelium of James** (120 AD): Mary needed a protector who would respect her vow of virginity. Joseph was "chosen by lot to take into [his] keeping the virgin of the Lord."
 - **Mark 4:26-29:** The kingdom of God grows silently like seed that sprouts and grows (first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear). The following occur in silence: Annunciation in Nazareth, journey to Bethlehem, birth in Bethlehem, raising in Nazareth – God wills that His kingdom grows in the silence of ordinary family life!

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Overshadow You

- Gabriel reveals that the conception of Jesus will be supernatural (i.e., the result of God's creative work in her) (Hahn & Mitch, 19).

<p>Ark of the Covenant</p> <p>"Then the cloud covered the tent of the meeting, and the glory of the Lord (<i>episkiasen</i>) filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34)</p>	<p>Mary</p> <p>The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow (<i>episkiasen</i>) you (Lk 1:35)</p>
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Overshadow You




Ark of the Covenant Dwelling place of God	Mary Dwelling place of God
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Ark of the Covenant

<p><u>Ark of the Covenant</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ark is on a journey (2 Sam. 6:2) • David dances before the ark (2 Sam. 6:14) • David asks, "How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" (2 Sam 6:9) • The ark stayed in the house of Obbedom for three months (2 Sam. 6:11) 	<p><u>Mary</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary is on a journey (Lk 1:39) • John leaps in the womb of Elizabeth (Lk 1:41) • Elizabeth asks, "How is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk 1:43) • Mary stayed for 3 months (Lk 1:56)
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Ark of the Covenant

<p><u>Ark of the Covenant</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried Word of God written on stone tablets (Ex 25:8-16) • Manna placed in it (Ez 16:32-35) • Shepherd's staff of Aaron (high priest) (Heb. 9:4) • Contained Aaron's rod 	<p><u>Mary</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried in her womb the Incarnate Word of God to be written on people's hearts (Heb 8:10) • Carried Jesus, the Bread of Life (Jn 6:58) • Carried Jesus, the eternal High Priest • Jesus will "rule the nations with a rod of iron" (Rev 12:5)
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Ark of the Covenant




Ark of the Covenant

Mary: Ark of the New Covenant

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Handmaid of the Lord

- While God sees Mary as "full of grace," Mary views herself as the "handmaid of the Lord."
- **Mary's self-designation:** "Handmaid" (Gk: *doûle*) refers to a servant or slave – someone who is completely at the disposal of another (Sri, 59).
- In Mary's mind, then, she is entirely devoted to the Person and work of her Son, Jesus Christ. She serves under Him and with Him.
- Mary is the first person to risk everything for the sake of Jesus Christ: the first of all believers (Sri, 60).

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For Us

- Mary does not live her life on her own terms. She does not set limits, parameters, and conditions for where she will allow God to lead her (Sri, 61).
- Oftentimes, our "yes" to God will lead us to unfamiliar territory and require tremendous trust (i.e., think of Mary at the foot of the Cross – "How did I end up here?")
- **Fulton Sheen:** Our free will is the only thing that is really our own. Our health, our wealth, our power – all these God can take from us. But our freedom he leaves to us... Because our freedom is our own, it is the only perfect gift we can make to God" (quoted in Sri, 61).

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Mary's Fiat

- Mary's fiat (let it be done) in the Greek expresses not just passive acceptance, but rather her depth of desire (joy) in giving herself away
 - "I really desire this to be done to me."
- In some sense, Mary's fiat functions like a vow. She binds herself to God, regardless of what it will cost her or where it takes her.
- **Hans Urs von Balthasar:** God wills for us to make vows when we are young because we have no idea how much it will cost us.
- **Covenant:** Divine Initiative (Himself) + Human Response (Self)

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Mary's Fiat

Key: Mary's fiat represents the perfect covenantal response to the invitation to divine union.

Jn. 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.

Mary: "Yes Lord, I freely accept your Son without any conditions or limitations. While I do not know what it will cost me, I trust you. On behalf humanity, I accept with joy."

Mary's "yes" is continual. Every time her yes caused some suffering, she had to reaffirm her "yes." As we will see, her "yes," while not always easy, is life-giving.

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Annunciation

Adam & Eve: Cast out of the Garden of Eden

Hands: Release the dove

God the Father: Looks down in center

Angel: Bows to Mary

Mary: Humbly sits praying



Fra Angelico's Annunciation in the Prado in Madrid

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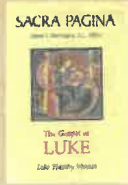
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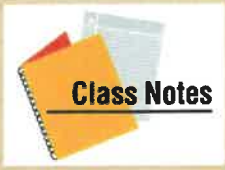
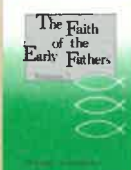
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