

## The Foot of the Cross

Just as Mary gave her "fiat" at the Annunciation, so now at the foot of the Cross, Mary gives her "fiat" again.

- Mary's "fiat" in the Annunciation finds its fullness in the silent "fiat" that she repeats at the foot of the Cross (Pope St. John Paul II, Mexico City Homily, 1979).

**Subjectively:** Mary does not think, "Oh, why did this happen. I wish it were otherwise. However, I accept God's will."

- More accurately, she thinks, "Heavenly Father, I praise you and I freely offer your own Son to You. He is your gift to me and to the world. I offer Him to you for your glory and for the salvation of the world" (priestly act).

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## The Foot of the Cross

Mary's faith is all the more remarkable given that Gabriel had promised that Jesus would be given the "throne of his David Father." He would "reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there would be no end" (Lk 1:32-33).

- Standing at the foot of the cross, Mary witnesses what, to human eyes, appears to be "the complete *negation of these words*."

• On Calvary, everything Gabriel announced to Mary about her Son's everlasting kingdom seems to be provided wrong (Sri. 141).

• **Key:** Here Mary faces her greatest test of faith (Sri. 142).

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## For Us

• There are many instances where Mary does not fully understand the Father's plan of salvation:

- **Finding in the Temple:** Joseph and Mary did not understand Jesus' response to them (Lk 2:50)
- **Wedding at Cana:** "Woman, what to me and what to you?"
- **Foot of the Cross:** Mary witnesses her crucified Son, whom she conceived, bore, and nursed and loved.

• **Key:** When we do not understand what God is doing in our lives and/or we are suffering terribly, how can Mary help us respond? I do not understand, but I can still love and trust. In suffering, we stand with Mary at the Cross on Good Friday.

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## The Foot of the Cross

• While Mary is obviously a historical figure, she also symbolically represents the following:

• **New Eve:** The mother of those regenerated (baptism) in Christ. Jesus is the New Adam, while Mary is the New Eve.

- **Remnant of Israel (*anawim*):** The materially and spiritually poor who seek God (e.g., widows, orphans, etc.).

• **The Church:** The Bride of Christ, who consents to the bridegroom's total gift of Himself on the Cross.

• Mary symbolizes perfect receptivity to the total self-offering of Jesus. In the persons of Jesus and Mary, the covenant between God and humanity is perfectly realized.

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## Woman

• **Woman:** As at Cana, Jesus refers to His mother as "woman."

- The title connects Gen. 3:15 (*protoevangelium*), Jn. 2:4 (Cana), and Rev. 12:1 (woman clothed with the sun).

• **Genesis 3:15** (NAB): I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; **They** will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel.

- "They" in Hebrew is *hu*. It can be taken in a physical collective (they) or physical-individual (he). Interestingly, the Vulgate gives it a feminine interpretation (she) thereby providing a Marian interpretation.

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## Woman

• Thus, the *protoevangelium*, which prophesies of a conflict between the serpent and the woman, a conflict which includes their "seeds," can be interpreted in three different ways:

• **They will strike your head:** Battle between the woman's seed (people of God) and the serpent's seed.

- **He will strike your head** (Septuagint): Battle between the woman's seed (Messiah) and the serpent's seed.

• **She will strike your head** (Vulgate): Battle between the woman's seed (Mary) and the serpent's seed.

• On the Cross, Christ crushes the serpent's head, while Mary at the Cross, dependent upon Christ, also crushes its head.

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### Woman

**He will crush your head** (Hebrew or Septuagint)

**She will crush your head** (Vulgate)

**They will crush your head** (Beloved Disciple or every Christian) (Hebrew)

Skull - head of serpent

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### Woman

- Rev. 12:1:** The woman is with child, and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth.
- While the labor pains appears to contradict Mary's miraculous birth, it likely refers to Mary's pain of bringing forth disciples at the foot of the Cross.
- Mary gives birth to the *Christus totus* (whole Christ). She bears Christ the head at Bethlehem, and Christ the body at Calvary.
- By referring to His mother as "woman," we are to see Mary's suffering as "labor pains" in bringing forth the life of Christ in her children (represented by the beloved disciple).

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### Sword Shall Pierce

**Mary:** Overwhelmed with grief - she falls into the arms of John

**Lk 2:35:** And you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

**Beloved Disciple:** Her child (all disciples)

Matthias Grünewald - Isenheim Altarpiece (1515)

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### For us

- Notice that Mary's "fiat" is made in the midst of tremendous suffering. Imagine witnessing your own child, whom you love so dearly, humiliated and crucified before you.
- Doing God's will is not always easy. In fact, it can be most painful. However, it *always* gives life, although it may not feel like it.
- Mary represents the receptive aspect of the marriage covenant. She is most generous in receiving God's love. As our mother and model, we, too, are called to be generous in receiving God who wills to communicate Himself to us.
- Key:** Christianity is much more about receiving than doing.

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### It is Finished

**It is finished:** The Vulgate is *consummatum est*, which can be translated as "It is consummated." (Jn 19:30)

- In Canon Law, a sacramental marriage that is *ratum et consummatum* (ratified and consummated) cannot be dissolved. What God has joined, let not man put asunder.
- The "marriage" covenant between God and humanity begun in the Incarnation, celebrated at Cana (wedding), is now "consummated" or brought to completion at Calvary.

**Augustine:** "Like a bridegroom Christ went forth from his chamber... He came to the marriage-bed of the cross, and there in mounting it, he consummated his marriage." (*Sermo Suppositus* 120)

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### Fruit of Love

**Beloved Disciple:** The beloved disciple is the "fruit of love" born from the total gift of Jesus (the Bridegroom) and Mary (the bride) who accepts the gift on behalf of all humanity

- Symbolically, the beloved disciple represents:
  - Every Christian:** All Christians, who are represented in the person of John, are children of Mary (Navarre, 233).
  - Authentic faith:** The Beloved Disciple represents the paradigm of authentic faith... he follows Jesus to the cross, is united with his mother... to such true disciples Jesus hands over the Spirit (19:30) (Culpepper, 226. cf. Sri, 147).

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## Fulfilling Old Testament

**Behold, your son:** Despite His extreme pain and agony, Jesus entrusts His mother to His beloved disciple.

- **Gen 3:1:** With the help of the Lord I have begotten man. As the New Eve, Mary bears fruit with God's help.

**Behold, your mother:** Jesus entrusts the beloved disciple to His mother.

- **Isaiah 49:20-22:** The children whom you had lost shall say to you, "This place is too small for me to live in..." They shall bring your sons in your arms, and your daughters shall be carried on her shoulders.

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## New Family

- With these words "Woman, behold your son," and "Behold, your mother," Jesus fulfills the OT themes of Mary as the New Eve (mother of the living) and Lady Zion (giving birth to a new people in the messianic age) (cf. Brown, 926).
- Additionally, Jesus is establishing or "constituting" a new relationship between his mother and his beloved disciple.
  - **Jesus:** "Mother, my beloved disciple is your son."
  - **Jesus:** "My beloved disciple, your mother."
- The beloved disciple's first mission is to accept Jesus' mother as *his* mother. It is an expression of spiritual maternity.

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## Into His Home

- **Took her into his home:** The Greek is much more dynamic. It has more of the connotation, "He took her into his personal world."
- The beloved disciple received Mary into "his own being" or into the inner recesses of his own being. Today, we would say that he took her into his own "heart."
- **Key:** By bringing Mary into his home (himself), the beloved disciple's life is transformed.
- Mary engenders new life not only in the beloved disciple, but in all those who bring her into their "home."

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## For Us

- At the foot of the Cross, Jesus establishes Mary and the beloved disciple in a new relationship (mother/son).
- This new relationship is not just between Mary and the beloved disciple, but rather between Mary and all Christians (symbolized by the beloved disciple).
  - Just as the first mission of the beloved disciple was to accept Mary and bring her into his own home (heart), so our first mission as Christians is to accept Mary as our mother by bringing her into our homes (hearts).
- In doing so, just as Mary engendered Christ in her womb, so she will engender Christ in our souls. Mary, Ever-Virgin, is also Ever-Mother!

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## For Us

**Pope St. John Paul II:** On the Cross Jesus did not proclaim Mary's universal motherhood formally, but established a concrete maternal relationship between her and the beloved disciple. In the Lord's choice we can see his concern that this motherhood should not be interpreted in a vague way, but should point to Mary's intense, personal relationship with individual Christians.


- May each one of us, precisely through the concrete reality of Mary's universal motherhood, fully acknowledge her as our own Mother, and trustingly commend ourselves to her maternal love (General Audience, April 23, 1997; cf. Sri, 148)
- Next time we will look at how as Mother, Mary engenders new life in her children

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## References



Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel  
R. Alan Culpepper



Ancient Christian Commentary

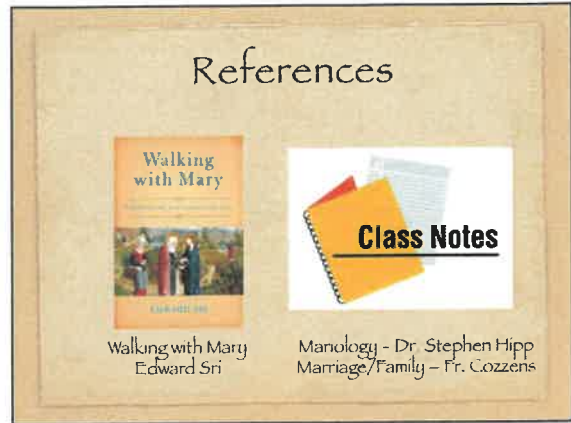


Gospel of John  
Raymond Brown

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