

August 14th, 2020

Maybe it's fitting, somewhere in God's economy of grace, that we move from the sad news last week of Gary's death, to one of the great celebrations of the Church this week: the great annual feast of St. Mary the Virgin.

I have never understood why she seems so controversial -- in Protestant circles she is a bugbear standing in for everything we disapprove in the Catholic world, and one's appreciation or dismissal of her legacy is tantamount to whether one is "on board" with a particular agenda. But to me these kinds of critiques have never held water. Surely she is a person, irreducible to the "mascot" she is so often treated as. And as a person, she holds an indisputably unique role in the unfolding of God's salvation: who said, "Yes," to God in a way that few do, who freely gave her own body to be the source of God's humanity.

Her agency is a powerful, everlasting testament against those who would take their desire by force, and her life's work is the epitome of what we hope as Christians: that, while "might makes right" in human history, there is a deeper power, a more profound good, that holds no matter the storms that may shake more shallow foundations -- a "power made perfect in weakness," "to cast down the mighty from their thrones and exalt the humble and meek."

If she is a Queen, then surely this is the nature of her majesty: that she knew her power, and wielded it in the manner most assured of changing the world, namely, in bringing about new life and refusing to turn away her eyes at his suffering and death. That power runs deeper than the power that sentenced him to die; that power is rooted deeper than the fabric of creation itself.

Mary's power is the power of tears to water fresh earth -- to assert by their fall that life is deeper than death, that God's heart is large enough to hold all that is and more, bringing finally to fruition even what is laid low before its time. There is no stopping those tears, no stopping them gathering into the headwaters of the river of life, flowing from the throne of God and watering the trees whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

This Sunday especially we celebrate her, and we celebrate all who walk in her footsteps whether they know it or not. We stand with those who rejoice in the miracle of new life, and we stand with those who mourn losses too sharp to bear. Pray that we may be given even a small portion of Mary's courage, to bear what we have to bear. So may our burdens be met with the passion of God, and the crucible empty to reveal the pure, immortal crown of love.

Yours faithfully,

Fr. Blake+