

A Contemplation of Mary

What do we know about Mary, the Virgin, mother of Jesus the Christ from Judeo/Christian tradition? There is very little spoken about her in the 4 Gospels.

In the New Testament, the Virgin Birth is spoken of in only 2 Gospels. The Gospel of Luke speaks of the manger where Jesus is born. The Gospel of Matthew Chapter 2, verse 11 says "And when they were come into the **House**, they saw a young child with Mary and fell down and worshipped Him." None of the Gospels makes reference to a stable where Mary gave birth, but it has become an integral part of Christian tradition.

With so little documented information in the Gospels, how does Mary become popularized as Divine Mother of Humanity?

In Elaine Pagel's book, "The Gnostic Gospels", she proclaims, "The absence of feminine symbolism for God marks Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in striking contrast to Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, Rome and Africa, which abounds in feminine symbolism". All references to God are expressions of, God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. The only mention of Mary has been that she was chosen by God to bear the Son.

Nothing in accepted biblical texts speaks of Mary's parents and the upbringing that prepared her to be the "Chosen One", but there are sources in other early texts that allude to it.

Before Mary was born, the Prophets were awaiting the coming of a Messiah. It is further stated that before the birth of Mary, her father, Joachim, had a vision in which he was told that they would have a daughter and she has a special prophecy to fulfill. He was told that his baby girl was not to be defiled. Joachim disclosed this vision to Anna, his wife.

During this period of history, some historians say that young girls were taken to the Temple by their parents to serve as Vestal Virgins, guardians of the "Eternal Flame", and that was an important distinction for those so chosen. According to an account of Mary's early life, she became a Vestal Virgin. The term "Virgin" in Hebrew means "young girl". So today there is dispute among scholars of Christian history whether this describes Mary in her marriage to Joseph and the Divine Birth.

It is difficult to piece together the life of Mary, because most of the information was likely transmitted by word of mouth and could have elaborations. Further, church scholars of that period, who recorded the bible, did not see her nor other females as important in Christian matters.

So how did we reach the point in Christian doctrine where we begin to acknowledge the dual aspect, male and female, as equally emanations from God.

In the Greek tradition, Sophia is said to be the name for the Virgin Mother of Humanity. It is from this tradition that Mary later becomes identified as the Creative Spirit from which All human life flows. She is nurturing, wise, ever suffering symbol of God's Love.

Given this notion, she becomes equally as important as the Son she brings into the world; one in which we recognize our spirituality, and we can experience it through the Christ Spirit of Jesus and Mary.

It becomes clear to me that Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Black Madonna symbolize the Virgin Mary, for the people of their culture and religion, as one who they can turn to. She is for them the Hope and Aspirations of a people seeking someone to turn to for wisdom, understanding and Love in the time of suffering and need.

Pope John Paul II in his 2000 millennium message elevates the status of both Eve and Mary. He describes Eve as the original symbol of Humanity, the mother who gave birth to Cain and Abel, and Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, as a symbol of the New Humanity; one in which All Humanity is One in Spirit with God. This statement changes the context which the Christian doctrine has relegated to women; that the Spirit of God resides equally in male and female.

For us of the Christian faith, Mary , as a symbol of the New Humanity, brings to us the equal importance of the female part of our spirituality, once again offering "Wholeness" to the life of Humanity.

It makes no difference which form she presents to us; the pure Virgin Mary of the traditional Christian church or the more earthly Divine form of Our Lady Guadalupe and the Black Madonna who can be reached, through prayer, by souls who are suffering, destitute and in need of her loving presence to sustain them; or whether she presents to us as White, Brown or Black. Her importance lives today as never before in the life of humanity. She lifts our thoughts out of the chaos that surrounds us, gives us Hope and Faith in the message of the Resurrected Christ and Love abounds in all that she presents to Humanity.