St. Mary: An Icon of Simplicity

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Introduction

To write about the virtue of Simplicity is to write about St. Mary. Although many virtues found residence with the Mother of God, yet when it comes to Simplicity, St. Mary immediately stands conspicuous and a sole source of inspiration and reference.In the book the Songs of Songs we read There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her. The daughters saw her and called her blessed, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who is she who looks forth as the morning, Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, Awesome as an army with banners? (Songs 6:8-10). This verse illustrates the uniqueness of St. Mary; and is applicable to her and her alone;unlike all the other verses that could be alluding to the human soulin particular or the church of Christ in general.

What is Simplicity

By definition, Simplicity is freedom from cunning or duplicity. It should not be confused with naivety or superficiality. Our Lord Jesus Christ classified naivety, superficiality and simplicity in His parable of the Sewer and the Seed.

Naivety has been likened to a sideway. Sideways are no good grounds for growing plants. When seeds fall on them, they remain there functionless until they find rest in the stomachs of birds and animals. So is the case with a nave person. People and events come across his way, but he cannot see through nor learn from them. A naive person lacks discernment and good judgment; and as a result, he can get himself into trouble.More often than not, naivetyis accompanied by ignorance and haughtiness.

Superficiality resembles stony places with no depth of earth. What happened to the seeds that fell on such stony places? They sprang up; but because they could not establish roots among those stony layers, they died shortly after.Superficiality characterizes a person who takes things at surface value without delving deep into their meaning or essence.

Simplicity is good ground, bound to yield crops regardless of size whether hundred, sixty or thirty. Simplicity defies and transcends both naivety and superficiality; because in essence simplicity is the spouse of wisdomand the child of humility both being important protective weapons to the human heart.

Whereas Simplicity does not worry about the consequences of obeying Gods Commands, Naivety does not worry about the consequences of ones actions. Superficiality on the other hand, thinks about neither actions nor consequences.

Traits of Simplicity (the Good Ground)

- Obedience

St. Mary heard the message from the angel; and although she was totally baffled by the seeming impossibility and absurdity of it, yet because the message was coming from God, she answered obediently "Let it be to me according to your word" without thinking of the hazardous, vague, undefined consequences. Was it not because of her obedience perhaps we would still be hopelessly in bondage with no future nor destiny. St. Marys obedience came like fresh water bringing satisfaction to the human race As cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a far country (Proverbs 25:25). The outcome of obedience is always a hundredfold blessing. St. Mary is revered by all generations.

- Innocence

This trait is an essentialrequirement for entry into the kingdom of heaven; "unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).To be Christlike is to return and be childlike.St. Marys innocence is both concealed and manifest in her total obedience. She, in a childlike manner, followed Joseph in their flight to Egypt; accepted to give birth to her mysteriously begotten Son in a manger; watched signs and wonders happen around her without questioning, freaking out, nor fainting. Who would behave like that except someone with a childlike attitude? In her innocence, the beautiful dove was like Noahs dove carrying the branch of Olive (Jesus Christ) bringing good tidings to Noah (the prototype of humanity that was in captivity) (Genesis 8:8-12). In many of her apparitions, St. Mary was seen by people as a beautiful dove hovering in the sky.

- Modesty

Having been informed from heaven concerning her future status as the full of grace, blessed among women, found grace with God, the mother-to-be of the Son of the most high, the King of kings and Lord of Lords, St. Mary was in a position to be psychologically and physically ready for grandeur and glamour. Yet, no artist portrayed her except in her ordinary attire of a humble, middle class Jewish girl who, having been dedicated by her parents to God, grew up in the temple. David wrote about St. Marys inner beauty and transparency saying, the royal daughter is all glorious within the palace

(Psalm 45:13). She, in her modesty qualified for St. Peters description of a modest woman whose beauty is not in arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel; rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:3-4). Even with the entire honor her Son has bestowed upon her, the At Your right hand stands the queen (Psalm 45:9) still chooses simple people to visit and simple churches to appear in.

- Affability

The mother of God is recorded to have done lots of merciful acts to the extent of giving away her food (oral tradition). The little that the four gospels have recorded about St. Mary reveals her loving character to her relatives, neighbors and her Sons disciples. As a prayerful, sociable person, she did not miss being with the apostles the night of the descent of the Holy Spirit; thus receiving the Holy Spirit just like them, although she was not assigned the service of Evangelism.

- Transparency

Having been purified by the Holy Spirit, the blessed Virgin became golden both in her inward and outward man. The Old Testament refers to her purity and transparency by the Covenant tabernacle which was gilded from inside and outside. Thus the Blessed Virgin Mary knew neither cunning, vile, duality, nor deceit.

- Flexibility

A woman of no choices and no preferences, the Blessed Virgin Mary was so flexible to all circumstances and surprises. Traveling from one inn to the other only to be met with closed doors, giving birth to her Lord and Savior in a manger, and a lot of other hardships were just means to strengthening her endurance and patience and preparing her for the grand performance, that of seeing her Son go to the cross of His own accord for no crime he had committed.

- Receptivity

No one can fathom the magnitude of the message delivered by a messenger from heaven to a fourteen year old simple Jewish girl. The only inquiry that the Virgin Mary allowed herself to make was concerning the logical impossibility of such an event to take place How can this be, since I do not know a man (Luke 1:34). The angels answer to her question, if submitted to human logic and analysis, would not be much of a help to anyone who is not anchored in faith. Yet St. Mary was totally, obediently receptive. Again, she received the Prophetic Word from Simon the Elder concerning her anguish for her sons agony with receptivity and obedience yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also (Luke 2:35). That is why she had been rewarded with the Prophetic Word that she will be honored by all generations henceforth all generations will call me blessed (Luke 1:48).

- Perceptivity

St. Marys perceptivity resulted from the wisdom the Holy Spirit had granted her. She was a woman of no idle talk. The four gospels have recorded only four phrases uttered by the Mother of God. She was more of actions than words; for the former speak louder than the latter. In spite of the wonders that she saw and heard happen before her, she kept everything in her heart But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 2:19). To no one, not even her Sons disciples did she talk about her Son and the time before He started His ministry at the age of thirty.

- Readiness

The Mother of God is an emblem of genuine humility in genuine service. Any other woman, having known, who she was about to become because of Who she was carrying in her womb, would have sat and rightfully expected myriads of angels to come and serve her. Instead, we see St. Mary had forgotten herself and got concerned about Elizabeth, her relative who was great with a child in her sixth month. She hurried to visit her and stayed almost three months there, only to disappear before the other women came; thus escaping mention; and Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house (Luke 1:56). St. Marys readiness got the hundred fold reward. For before she had time to announce the glory that had been bestowed on her, the baby in Elizabeths womb declared it bowing down in honor and worship to the King of Kings that she was carrying.

- Vulnerability

In spite of the fact that she was the mother of God, St. Mary proclaimed her need for salvation just like any other human being my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior (Luke 1:47) calling herself maiden rather than queen or lady of Honor.

- Power

Awesome as an army with banners, St. Marys powerful simplicity was functional before and after her departure to heaven. We see her exercising her maternal power when she went looking for her missing Son even in the temple; and in a very few authoritative words she let Him know how she felt about His disappearance from home (Luke 2:48). A word from her convinced her Lord and Savior to go out of His way, divert His plan and perform His first miracle at the Wedding of Cana. Mistaken are those who think that the role of St. Mary ended with her delivery of her Son. On the contrary the power of that Dove of Noahs Arc is still functional. History records stories and stories of the Virgin Mary performing acts of power. One of the most interesting stories is when she repeatedly appeared to Caliph Maamoun, forcing him to write a letter to command the prince to stop ruining the churches in Egypt. When he protested that he had no messenger to carry the letter from Syria to Egypt, she exercised her ultimate power by carrying it herself in a dovelike capacity.

Thousands of years before the appearance of St. Mary on the stage of history, the Old Testaments prophets prophesied about this simple, obedient, innocent, loving, receptive, perceptive, powerful Jewish girl who deserved to be chosen to become the Mother of the Savior of humanity. She has been likened to Noahs dove (Genesis 8:8-12) bringing about good tidings; a cloud ridden by Christ (Isaiah 19:1), Golden Censor (Hebrews 9:4), Aarons rod (Numbers 17:1-10), the Golden Lamp (Exodus 25:31-35) to mention just a very few.

May the prayers and supplications of St. Mary, the Mother of our God be with us all. Amen.

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