



**"FIAT MIHI SECUNDUM VERBUM TUUM!"**

Dear Friends,

During the month of May we customarily give public honour to Our Blessed Lady in our communities. As this is not possible during these challenging times, it is still good that we should reflect upon the important place Mary has in our Catholic life and our personal journey of discipleship.

2006 was a challenging year for me. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart I endured six hours of surgery on my eyes, not one but two detached retinas! For a few weeks afterwards, I had to lie in the same position for fifty minutes of every hour, day and night, not knowing whether my sight would return. Fortunately, I was supported by the many prayers of others. In my darkest hours, the rosary beads slipped through my fingers and the simple prayers of this wonderful gift to us became my rock and support.

Mary is the best model of discipleship we have. During the days after the Ascension, the New testament tells us that Mary is in Jerusalem with the apostles and disciples, preparing for the outpouring the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday. And Mary stands with us today in the midst of our Covid- 19 crisis, patiently waiting for deliverance and pointing us towards the risen Jesus.

Mary is firmly rooted in God's word. When St Luke tells us of the Annunciation,

where would he have gained his information? From the testimony of Mary surely. And this Gospel moment is laden with references to the Old Testament scriptures. Like many before her, Mary is disturbed by the revelation of her vocation. And yet her humble acceptance of God's plan for her life is such an example to each one of us today.

Mary moves with charity and joy to share God's revelation with her kinswoman Elizabeth. Mary is the model of missionary discipleship and a challenge to ourselves to follow her example of seeing that mission defines the nature of the Church and is not an optional extra.

At the Nativity of Jesus, Mary receives in her arms the gift of God's Word truly incarnate. Again there is a sense of pilgrimage about all this. Mary and Joseph have journeyed from Nazareth for the census. Shepherds have come from the fields to the manger. Wise men have travelled from afar, following the star. As a Church today, we too are called to come and adore the incarnate Son of God. This often involves us moving from a place of lethargy to becoming more involved in the witness of the Church in today's world.

When Our Lady and St Joseph take the infant Christ to the Temple for the Presentation, Simeon and Anna recognise Him, are filled with joy and proclaim the prophetic message that the Messiah has come to His people. There is a sense of real worship and adoration about this Gospel moment, which challenges our indifference at times to giving ourselves generously to what God is asking of us today.

And then that mysterious moment when Mary and Joseph must return to Jerusalem, distracted and out of their minds, a real sense of loss, that they cannot find Jesus. The Carmelite tradition speaks of this waiting on the Lord, sometimes within a dark night of faith. And when I pray this rosary mystery, it is easy to call to mind the many who have lost their faith and sometimes are searching in the darkness. There are those too, St Mother Teresa of Calcutta for example, for whom faith does not bring much sense of God's presence, but nevertheless a real fidelity to what God has called us to do.

There is much to ponder in the joyful mysteries and of course, there are the other sets of mysteries to contemplate too. We can take another look at the rosary in October! In the meantime, I commend to you Fr Ken Payne's little book *The Rosary for Today*, as they say, available from all good bookshops!

✠ David