

**A Sermon for the 10th Sunday after Pentecost  
August 17, 2025**



*Come to New Life!*

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**St Mary the Virgin**

**New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH**

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[Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Today, we celebrate St. Mary the Virgin. In past sermons, I've focused a lot on the words of the Magnificat. However, today I want to focus on the person of Mary. Sometime during our Christian life, we may have heard a lot about Mary or next to nothing about her. Regardless of which of these is true, Christians around the globe know or at least have heard that Mary was the mother of a man called Jesus. Various denominations, regard her in different ways. Since the early days of the Church Mary has been held in high regard and set apart as a very special member among the saints, yet, more than just a saint. Mary stands out among the saints of God. She enjoys an efficacy that belongs to Christ's mother alone. She is historically highly regarded within the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern Churches.

In my Baptist upbringing she wasn't mentioned at all, and in my later Roman Catholic years it was the opposite extreme as they celebrate this day as the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, body and soul, into heaven. (Not a resurrection or ascension, mind you). And here WE are, today, celebrating and acknowledging in our own way the life and faith of this extraordinary woman. Throughout Christian history we find several litanies that address Mary in various ways invoking her mediation. In Marian Litanies she is known by many titles which we may have heard: for example, we hear her called Mother of God, Mother of the Church, Mother of hope, Virgin most prudent, Virgin most faithful, Seat of wisdom, Spiritual vessel, Mystical rose, Tower of David, Morning star, Queen of apostles, Queen of virgins, and many other titles.

So, who is this woman we so revere and what can we learn from her? First, she is a woman of faith. At the very young age of most likely 14 or so, she was visited by an angel, a messenger angel, Gabriel, where he announced God's will for her. Ok, shocked,

scared, what? God wants me to what?! Despite what would have been an obvious moment of shock and awe, she willingly gave her “fiat”, her yes to God’s will at becoming the mother of Jesus who will be the Savior, and at great risk to herself. In those times being an unwed pregnant woman warranted not only great shame, but also a stoning to death. What would this mean for her going forward? Would Joseph disown her? Would she be dragged out of her house and stoned to death? Would her parents have to live with the shame? However, none of these things happened. We learn that Mary ranks among the chosen instruments that God uses to communicate his love to the world. She would become the most exquisite participant in the human drama of salvation.

Second, she is a mother. She, with Joseph, raised Jesus as He grew in wisdom and grace and knowledge. There’s not much mention of Joseph in the Scriptures. He is completely silent and it is both assumed and believed that he most likely died early on sometime during Jesus’s young adulthood. But it was that dedication of a mother’s love that continued to form Jesus as a son and a man. Imagine, she would have days of great joy and others of great worry and sorrow. Despite her yes to God did she understand everything? No, certainly not. She was going on faith, day by day. Imagine too how she would have run to her child Jesus when he fell to tend to his scrapes and bruises, and she would have lovingly prepared his meals and tucked him in at night. She would search frantically for three days when the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem teaching at the synagogue. She would have wiped his brow and washed his feet after a hot day of work and play or after hours and hours of preaching to crowds and healing many as an adult. She would have fretted with worry when things got testy with crowds or Roman authorities. Sometimes she may have traveled

with Jesus and other times stayed behind with worry wondering if she would see Him again, if Romans or naysayers would finally get Him. Overtime, as Jesus's ministry grew she would have become like a mother to the twelve as they formed their own family-like community.

Third, she is an intercessor – always praying for her family, faith community, town, and society (as we've read and talked about before within the context of the Magnificat). The Magnificat are her words that reflect her hope, trust, and faith in God's promises as well as shows her knowledge and sensitivity to the plight of her people, God's people, and the social structures at play. Tradition holds that her first intercession was at the Wedding at Cana when the hosts ran out of wine and she pleaded with Jesus about it. It wasn't his time, but could He say no to His mother with her pleading eyes peering into His very soul? It would follow that many more disciples over centuries and centuries would ask her intercession, asking to take their prayers to the feet of the Lord Jesus that He may not say no to His mother. Her mediation is intimately linked with her motherhood.

Fourth, She is a beacon of hope – the hope of perseverance, of God's faithfulness, and the hope of our own destiny beyond this physical life on earth. In the first part of today's collect we pray, "O God, you have *taken to yourself* the blessed Virgin Mary, mother of your incarnate Son: Grant that we, who have been redeemed by his blood, *may share with her the glory of your eternal kingdom....*" This is *OUR* hope! Since the earliest days of the Church hierarchy and among the faithful, it has been accepted that Mary had no other children with Joseph, and that she remained a virgin. Hence, St. Mary the *Virgin*. We also find in the early Church traditions that Mary was considered as having a very special place in heaven with her

Son and her role as an intercessor bringing hope to countless faithful throughout the ages.

Finally, Mary becomes our very own Mother. In today's second reading to the Galatians we hear that we are children and heirs of God by adoption. At the time of Mary's most intense grief as she stood at the foot of the cross watching her Son die, we are reminded of our destiny as children and heirs. We are grafted into the family line of Jesus adopted as brothers and sisters of Jesus, as children of God, and if we are indeed his legitimate children, then we are his legitimate heirs! And that makes Mary our Mother as well! This is explicitly evidenced in Jesus' words from the cross to both the Apostle John and his mother. "Woman, behold your son. Behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his home." Now let's examine how this fits with the title of St. Mary the Virgin. If Mary was not a virgin and she had other children with Joseph and Jesus had biological brothers and sisters then there would be no need for Jesus to secure his mother's care and well-being to someone not of family. In this deed, Jesus was designating John as Mary's child, another son, and giving John a mother. By extension, through this act, Jesus is effectively giving his mother to all of us, and we all have become her children as well, other sons and daughters. This is a final act of love and compassion providing for his mother's future care and establishing a new family bond, which extends to us. This new family unit is also seen in post-crucifixion scenes such as Mary and other women being present in the aftermath of Christ's passion and death, her presence with the twelve leading up to Pentecost and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, all supported by repeated references to everyone present as brothers and sisters. Additionally, this action taken by Jesus also secures the perpetual virginity of Mary. This supports the argument

that she did not have other biological children to take care of her. If she had, there would have been no need for Jesus to make such a proclamation from the cross. Now I know that this has been disputed in many circles for a long time and most likely will continue. It is a matter of faith. However, the Church has long taught as stated in many prayers and even in our book of saints, Holy Men, Holy Women that “one who stood in so intimate a relationship with the incarnate Son of God on earth must, of all the human race, have the place of highest honor in the eternal life of God,” and then goes on to quote a paraphrase of an ancient Greek hymn, “O higher than the cherubim, more glorious than the seraphim, lead their praises, alleluia.”

Mary's place was pretty much secured in Christian belief among local churches by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, if not before among the traditional beliefs of the faithful at large, and certainly by the 13<sup>th</sup> century with pretty much universal agreement with a few dissenting voices here and there. Mary embodies the people of both the Old and New Testament and is closely associated with all the mysteries of Jesus' life; therefore, it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit has led those in the Church to belief in Mary's share in His glorification as we who *believe* will all one day enjoy. In light of this it is easy to pray her Magnificat with new meaning. In her glory she proclaims the greatness of the Lord and finds joy in her savior. God has done marvels to her and she leads others to recognize God's holiness. Mary *always* points to Jesus, *always* leads us to Jesus. Her Magnificat is our Magnificat. If we were to write our own version of a Magnificat, what would it include? What would it sound like?

Mary is the sign that God's promises will be fulfilled. The feast we celebrate today is not about the technical teaching of Mary's passage into heaven, but about the completion of her mission on

this earth. Her destiny is our destiny! The greatest testimony we can give is the testimony of a life lived in complete harmony with the will of God. When Mary arrives to greet Elizabeth her cousin exclaims, “Blessed are you who *believed!*” Mary trusted that the God who had been faithful to his promises to Abraham, Moses, and David would be faithful to his promises to her, and to us!