

- “*Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.*” ...one of the most poignant phrases in all Scriptures...applying not only to Mary, but potentially to all of us—if we would just follow it!
- What is spoken to us by the Lord? The Scriptures themselves, and the doctrinal teaching of the Church—the Church which Jesus assures us will lead into all truth...this Church which the gates of Hell will not prevail against. Assurance that we need remember in these trying times IN the Church.
- Now, the word “prevail” implies that there will be enemy attacks... breakthroughs in the defensive line...but enemy incursions do not mean defeat for the defenders.
- As we too often see, the Enemy constantly makes his incursions against the Church...and yet Our Lord Himself assures us of the ultimate victory: “*the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*”

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- This is something we remember as we hear from the prophet Micah: “*You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah...from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times.*”
 - ...bringing to mind the first line of John’s Gospel: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” (John 1:1)
 - Micah’s reference to Bethlehem would be quoted by the chief priests and scribes to king Herod when the Magi come seeking the newborn king...leading to Herod’s callous execution of the infant children around Bethlehem because of his mad ambition and paranoia...and St. Matthew would recall in his Gospel a quote from Jeremiah: “*A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more.*” (Matthew 2:18)
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 - Ramah was a town about 5 miles north of Jerusalem, in the region of Benjamin, and Rachel was buried in that area after she died giving birth to her son Benjamin.

- The prophet Jeremiah had poetically depicted Rachel “weeping” at a time when the Israelites were going into the Babylonian exile during Jeremiah’s time...a period indicating extreme tragedy and sadness that Matthew then uses to compare the death of the children of Bethlehem.

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- But why does Jesus come?
 - Our reading from Hebrews says it most succinctly, quoting the prophet having the Messiah says to the Father: “*Behold, I come to do Your will.*”
 - And that will of the Father is nothing less than the redemption of humanity from its sins through, as the reading continues, the offering of His body once for all.
 - Therefore, since Our Lord puts total emphasis on doing the will of the Father, should not we—His disciples—do likewise?
 - ...especially since the will of the Father is that which is, by definition, that which is truly good and right...not only for ourselves, but for all.

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- Remembering this...as we await the coming of our Lord, we cannot but recall the fidelity and acquiescence of His Mother, in that great proclamation of faith and trust to the will of God: “*Let it be done to me according to your word.*” Let whatever God wills for me be done.
 - WE tend to pray implicitly—and almost demand—“MY will be done!...else, I will leave you!” to God...as if WE were all-knowing rather than He...as if WE were more munificent than HE—He who even gave His only son upon a cross for our salvation.
 - But Mary accepts with absolute humility and trust what her Son would later teach the world: “*Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven*” ...offering her whole being to God, come what may.
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 - As often as we pray those words, how often do we really think about them...and offer ourselves wholeheartedly to the will of our Heavenly Father...come what may?

- God very often works through difficulty and tragedy in history—from Abraham onward—the time of slavery in Egypt, the wandering in the desert, the Babylonian Exile, the centuries of foreign occupations of Israel, and, most of all...the cross.
- So...how do we now demand that no trials come to us? We, who have been so blessed both materially and even more so, spiritually, in His Church?
- Whatever hardships or difficulties we endure here on earth are trivial compared to the eternal life to come...as St. Paul writes: *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”* (Romans 8:18)
- So...let us always trust in God...perhaps not being able to discern His way or plan, but knowing that He the divine planner always has a purpose and can change tragedy into triumph.
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- The Archangel assured Mary: *“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God”* ...because of her faith...because of her trust and acquiescence to His will.
- Thus, such fidelity and trust is what the wise will seek: to live lives in such a way as to find favor in the eyes of God.
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- Did Mary ever face hardship? Many times. The fleeing to Egypt with Joseph and her newborn, the loss of the boy Jesus for three days, and most of all the trial of Calvary.
- Imagine, you mothers, helplessly watching your child nailed upon a cross for hours to die an agonizing death.
- And yet, her prayer was nonetheless: *“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven...for I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.”*
- If we go forth with the same attitude, prayer and patience...declaring with Mary “I am the handmaid/manservant of the Lord”, and living that commitment...we, too, will hear at our judgment that beautiful exclamation of Elizabeth: *“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”*

Reading 1

[Mi 5:1-4a](#)

Thus says the LORD:

You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah
too small to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel;
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient times.

Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time
when she who is to give birth has borne,
and the rest of his kindred shall return
to the children of Israel.

He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock
by the strength of the LORD,
in the majestic name of the LORD, his God;
and they shall remain, for now his greatness
shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19](#)

(4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power,
and come to save us.

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

May your help be with the man of your right hand,
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.
Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Reading II

[Heb 10:5-10](#)

Brothers and sisters:

When Christ came into the world, he said:
“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;
in holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight.
Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the scroll,
behold, I come to do your will, O God.’“

First he says, “Sacrifices and offerings,
holocausts and sin offerings,
you neither desired nor delighted in.”
These are offered according to the law.

Then he says, :Behold, I come to do your will.”

He takes away the first to establish the second.
By this “will,” we have been consecrated
through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Gospel

[Lk 1:39-45](#)

Mary set out
and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of Zechariah
and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb,
and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,
cried out in a loud voice and said,
“Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

**Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”**