

Interrupted by Grace

As an adult, Mary would have stood about five feet tall, as was the average height of women in the first century.

She would have had olive skin, brown eyes, and dark hair, resembling the Middle Eastern population of her region.

Mary would have spoken Aramaic, Hebrew, and a smattering of Greek.

As a Jewish mother, Mary would lead the Friday night sabbath prayers at home. She prayed the psalms. She celebrated Passover. At the synagogue in Nazareth, she sat and stood in an area separated from the men, as was the custom at the time.

As a young woman in her teens, her marriage would have been arranged by her parents. She may have worried about childbirth, as one half of women died from complications connected giving birth.

Nonetheless, Mary may have hoped for many children, as large families would assure a living in her old age.

Because Mary had few legal rights, she would not have expected her name to have been written down or recorded in the annals of history.

And yet, the scriptures tell us that this seemingly unremarkable, obscure life, the life of a Jewish teenager was *interrupted* (Luke 1:26-38).

Mary was addressed by name, so as to be forever remembered.

She was asked to consent to something that she would not be able to completely understand.

She was invited to trust that God would be with her; that he would not fail her; that he would do great things through her.

In saying "yes" Mary became a living temple, a tabernacle of flesh and bone, carrying the Divine into the world.

This grace-filled interruption changed the world. And it speaks to unfolding of our own lives.

Every single one of us will have our lives interrupted by something we did not expect or plan.

- The unexpected birth of a child or grandchild;
- The responsibility we never imagined undertaking;
- The new friend that enters our lives;
- The feeling of love we thought we had lost forever;
- The pandemic we could have never predicted.

Like Mary, we'll have to revise our plans. We'll be invited to trust that God is with us, that He will not fail us, that He will use us to be instruments of His grace in the middle of what seems to be a huge detour. Something new is being "born" from the disruption.

I have a friend who is fond of saying: *"Steven, there is the Christmas you plan and there is the Christmas you will end up with. Good practice for life!"*

The path "we end up with" is always full of grace.

Pray, that like Mary, we'll find the nerve to offer a brave "yes" and embrace the path ahead.

Fr. Steven Labaire