

Advent 2 – Reflection

Mary by Ann Lewin

Full of grace
I wonder what that felt like.
Was your acceptance swift
And total, meek as your
Stained glass image?
Or was it wrung from you
In sweat and agony of mind?
The God I know does not get submissions very easily,
But then I'm not a Saint.
Perhaps you weren't either,
Just an ordinary person,
Struggling to understand.
Has the adulation over the years
Been a bit of an embarrassment,
Imprisoning you in dogma,
Preventing us from seeing you
As you are?

The family, were they convinced?
And the neighbours? I've often
Wondered about that visit to
Elizabeth – was that to get you
Away from all the gossip, until
The wedding could be arranged
Discreetly? And what about Joseph?
He must have thought it
A fine kind of angel who'd visited you.

We'll never know – but whatever
Happened, I'm pretty sure
The sword that pierced your soul
Didn't wait for the crucifixion.
And I've got a feeling that
You watch with some sympathy
As we struggle with our
Mysteries and pain.

I was fortunate to work with an excellent parish youth leader when I was a curate. He used to say that he was irritated by the images of Mary in statues and stained-glass windows. He said that she was usually depicted with downcast eyes and her head tilted to one side as if she had a crick in her neck! He felt that this pose was intended to depict her humility, but he argued that it did not reflect her true character. His point was that Mary must have been a woman of great courage and determination to accept the role that God assigned her. Her "Yes" to God required great strength of character.



**"The Walking Madonna"
by Elisabeth Frink**

In this poem Ann Lewin presents a similar image of Mary. She helps us to understand the depth of criticism that Mary must have felt. Mary could have become an outcast from society if her family and Joseph had not supported her. Parenthood (or any loving relationship) can be painful. When we commit ourselves to loving another person, we open ourselves to opportunities for hurt and anger as well as joy. Mary knew that pain of love. I like Ann Lewin's phrase "I'm pretty sure the sword that pierced your heart didn't wait for the crucifixion." It's a dramatic image based on a Biblical text, but it also brings home to us the commitment that Mary made when she accepted God's will. It was a commitment that affected her whole life.

Ann Lewin uses Mary's situation to reflect on our lives. What is God calling us to do and are we willing to submit to God's will? There may be a cost to such commitment. It may create change in our lives. It may lead to pain and confusion. This season of Advent gives us an opportunity to reflect on our lives and consider whether such change is needed. The reassuring thought is that God is with us through these times of reflection and change, and Mary understands what we face because she has faced the most dramatic change of all.

Consider: Does this poem change your image of Mary? What can we learn from Mary to help us follow God's will in our lives?

Prayer:

Lord, we continue on our journey and, like Mary, we open ourselves to your will. Support us as we struggle with our mysteries and pain.

Be our companion and our guide as we travel and light our way with your love and grace on our pilgrimage. Amen