

Mary as a Young Adult

Mary was on the brink of young adulthood when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her. She was engaged to Joseph. She was anticipating a change in lifestyle, getting ready to enter into the adult world as a wife. She would soon enough be facing the challenges of setting up a new home, taking care of a husband and even raising children. New experiences would require new responses, require her to make new choices and adjust from her formerly safe world with her parents. When Mary began her adult life, she was faced with deciding whether God would be a priority in her life. Most of us, however, are not confronted by an angel and asked point blank if we will choose “for God.” Yet, by the choices we make throughout life, we indicate whether God is a priority or even a consideration. Unfortunately, many do not say “Yes” to God until late in their lives. When faced with difficult choices do you choose “for God” even if the result is not the popular, trendy or accepted route? Do you choose for God even if the result is inconvenient or difficult?

Mary faced being a social outcast as a result of her decision to make God a priority in her life. She followed God anyway. Mary gave up the comfort of the life she had been anticipating. She had to flee to Egypt with Joseph and live in a strange land away from her family to save the child. She did not turn back, longing for the comfort and safety to which she was accustomed. She had chosen her path and it was not a comfortable one, yet she followed it.

Have you (or were you as a young adult) faced with making an unpopular decision? If so, did it occur to you to turn to God for help in making that decision? Did anyone help steer you toward relying on God in making your difficult decision?

What decisions do young adults today face where peer pressure or societal norms encourage them to make decisions that lead them away from God?

How can parishes help young adults make responsible faith-based decisions? Does your parish have any such programs or strategies?

If following the Gospel is not comfortable or convenient, do you still say “Yes” to God?

Do you/did you, as a young adult, make time to do more than just go to church on Sunday?

How do you encourage young adults to become involved in church ministries and other church organizations? What would encourage you to become involved?

If you are in a group and the conversation steers toward religion, do you feel comfortable in discussing your faith? Why or why not? Do you avoid talking about religion in non-Catholic settings? Why?

Who do you think is happiest with the rule that one should not discuss religion or politics in social settings? God or the Devil?

What would make you feel more comfortable to discuss and share your faith with both Catholics and non-Catholics?

New responsibilities were thrust on her and she had no experience in dealing with them. She trusted God to equip her for each new challenge. When making life decisions, do you (or did you as a young adult) consider your faith and God in making those decisions? On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being a priority and 5 indicating that no thought was given to the matter, rate yourself (privately) on how whether you make/made your faith and God a priority in the following areas. Then add the totals and divide by 10. How do you rate?

Who to date and how to conduct yourself on a date.

Who to marry.

What career to follow.

How to raise children.

Which friends to cultivate.

How to spend your money.

What to do in your free time.

How to treat your family members.

How to act in the workplace.

How to act in social settings/college.

If it did not occur to you to think about God and your faith in one of these areas, why didn't it? Do you feel you live your faith? Do you share your faith with others?

If you do not have a faith that is alive and so vibrant that it flows into all areas of your life, what do you think you could do to improve it?

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Money is one of the biggest problems that face young married couples and, in fact, many people these days. Have you ever sat down and evaluated just how important material wealth is to you and/or your spouse? What do you spend your money on?

How much did you spend on eating out last month?

How much did you spend directly (not through your Sunday donations) feeding the poor?

Do you think you would survive if you ate less and gave some of the money you normally spend on food to a homeless shelter to feed the hungry?

How much did you spend on clothes in the last six months?

How much did you spend on clothing the poor in the last six months (not including Sunday donations.)

How many coats do you have in your closet? Do you need them all to stay warm?

Are you doing unto others as you do unto yourself?

How much did you spend on books, newspapers and magazines last year?

How much did you spend on religious books, newspapers and magazines last year?

If you were to grade yourself on how faithfully you live the Gospel by how you spend your money, what would your report card look like?

What can you do to make God a priority in your life?

If you are a more mature adult, was God a priority in your life when you were in your 20's? If so, why? If not, why not? What difference do you think your choice made in the rest of your life?

How can you personally help someone younger choose for God when it comes time to set his or her life priorities?

All young adults face many challenges brought about due to the transition from childhood to adulthood. The most important question is: will they face this challenge with God or attempt to go it alone? Mary faced many challenges after she said "Yes" to God. She experienced confusion like many young adults, yet she trusted God to lead her through the confusion. Young adulthood can and usually is a time of confusion. If a person chooses to place himself or herself in God's hands, it requires a great deal in trust.

Please answer the following questions: (If you are not a young adult, but have a child in that age group, you might think of how he or she would answer these questions or how you would have answered these questions as a young adult.)

Do you trust God?

How would you describe your relationship with God?

How often do you call on God to help you?

When do you talk to God?

Do you talk to Him everyday?

Do you have a daily relationship with God or just a Sunday relationship with Him?

What could you do to improve your relationship with God?

How could your parish help you?

Mary suffered, yet she did not let that suffering turn her from God or her assigned work. It would have been natural for Mary to question why it was necessary for her to flee in the night to escape to Egypt with Joseph and Jesus just a few days after childbirth. We imagine she would have suffered knowing that Herod wanted to kill her baby son (and by implication, her). It would have been natural for her to feel abandoned by God when her tiny baby was born in a stable when she had been told that he was to be the savior of the world. Yet, she trusted God throughout all of her trials. He did not abandon her and she allowed him to lead her to safety at every turn.

It is easy to react with emotion to stressful situations and life's disappointments particularly when you are at an age when you haven't had a lot of experience handling life challenges on your own.

As a young adult, do you (or did you) face a challenge that caused you to question God?

Have you ever turned away from God due to some disappointment in life? Why?

Since you are here today, you must have come back to God. What brought you back?

Do you know any young adults who are estranged from God? What can you do to help them find their way back?

How would you describe the religious nature of the young adults you know? Are they involved in church and do they live their faith, whatever faith that may be. Can you even tell whether they are practicing their faith by the way they live? Do you spend your

free time with friends who have chosen to make God a priority in their lives?

How do you feel about the statement “Friends don’t let friends go to Hell?”

Mary faced the prospect of being an unwed mother in a community that would condemn her when she said “Yes” to God. Yet, she did say “Yes” to God and to life for Jesus and, as a result, life for all of us.

If an unwed mother came to you for advice about what to do about an unplanned pregnancy, what would you tell her? Would you try to help her make a decision that would say “Yes” to life?

Do you do anything to help young women in this situation say “Yes” to life? If so, what?

Do you say “Yes” to life in any other way, such as, for example, voting for Pro-life candidates in elections.

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