

Who is Mary to us?

St Mary is the Patron Saint of our church here in Weekley. On this her Feast Day and the Patronal Festival of our church, it is worth us asking; Who is Mary to us?

When we think of Mary, we must also think of the Incarnation. That blessed time when her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, walked among us.

Of all the Saints, Mary holds the most special place in the story of Jesus. It is a shame that Christendom has been so divided over her place since the Reformation. That is more about tribal faction within the church than any accurate theology.

The irrefutable truth is that we cannot grasp Jesus fully without Mary. Her acceptance and obedience to God enables the miraculous events to unfold, beginning with that immaculate Child born in a stable. The whole story begins with her saying yes to God. 'Let it be done to me according to your word' – is her response to the Angel Gabriel. With that yes, Mary accepts her part in God's divine plan. The same is true for us. We can be obedient. We can say yes to God. And in doing so, step into His plans for us. Mary's 'yes', is then an example of obedience that we can follow.

But I want to suggest that Mary's place is more still. Her 'yes' is just the beginning. Mary is the Mother of Our Lord for all

eternity. Her being the mother of Jesus is a simple fact, a truth that will remain beyond time. Jesus' love and compassion for the world is infinite and as Mary steps up to the role of His mother she also steps up as our mother too. Through Him, Mary is mothering the world!

The greatest gift anyone can give us is their prayers. Prayers for our protection, our safety and the eternal salvation of our souls. All the Saints have honoured places at our Lord's side as they sit in His heavenly presence. As such, they sit, not as barriers, but as gateways and channels revealing the divine grace. But Mary, whose obedience and sacrifice is so great, not least in that moment when she stands at the foot of the cross, sits most honoured of them all.

Her intercessions, her prayers on our behalf are the most highly valued and it is through her prayer that she is mothering the World.

My favourite statues of Mary are always with child. As I look upon them, they remind me that she is a mother, our mother too. But in her mothering she calls us, through her example, to share in her mothering too. Like any good mother, she stands at the foot of the cross desperate to help her son, but no-one will listen or take notice of the horror unfolding before her eyes. All the earthly authorities are too concerned with their own self-preservation to offer any compassion.

And so she pleads with the only authority who will listen. She falls to her knees at the feet of her Son and prays to the Father. He does the rest.

And so, that becomes her divine mission for all eternity – to mother the world through her intercessions, her prayers.

And so it is right that we should ask her to pray for us, as with all the saints, but her most especially. And following her example, each of us is called to pray unceasingly for the world too. When we feel distraught, concerned, upset at the events unfolding around us, when we feel powerless, Mary becomes our aid. And like her, we must fall to our knees and pray to the only authority that will listen – Our Lord and God – pleading for our Lord's compassion to infiltrate the darkness and the gloom.

So I ask you again; who is Mary to us?

Mary, the Mother of Our Lord.

Mary, the Mother of our World.

Mary, our mother too.

Amen.