

Mary and the Message

Mary is the sadness of the mothers who have lost their children and no one will tell them where they are. Mary is the tenderness that looks with anguish for a solution.

(Oscar Romero 12/24/78)

A few years back Mel Gibson produced the movie; *The Passion of the Christ*. While the storyline is the last twelve hours of Christ's life, what made the movie powerful for me, as a mother, was the depiction of Mary. The script and the actor herself gave beauty, depth of love, strength of character and faith of a woman in an otherwise extremely brutal movie that portrayed the horror of humanity's atrocities towards each other and in particular - Jesus.

I was so aware, in my own heart, of Mary's feelings throughout the movie. Her pain and anguish permeated the screen, as she watched in horror the Son she gave life being brutally tortured before her eyes and then standing helplessly as she watched Him die a horrible death. The flashbacks throughout the movie of Jesus as a child, and as a young man sharing moments with His mother spoke volumes of the love between a mother and a son; moments many mothers can relate in their own motherhood.

At one point, when Jesus was falling from the weight of the cross, the movie showed a flashback of a young Mary running to Jesus when, as a toddler, He began to fall. As any young mother knows when witnessing such a moment you run to your child, pick them up, hold them, kiss their bruises and reassure them that mommy is there for them. But as Mary now sees her adult Son fall, she is shoved away and not able to hold Him or kiss His many wounds or reassure Him of her presence and love. I suspect almost every mom in the theatre wept along with me at that moment because we understood Mary's anguish and helplessness. For a mother, it doesn't matter the age of the child when they are falling or getting hurt. A mom wants to be there to hold her child and reassure her child of her presence and her love and that it is going to be 'okay.'

Watching Mary so helpless to stop what was happening to Jesus while He stood before the crowd of accusers and later as He was nailed to the cross, symbolizes so many mothers around our world who witness helplessly as their children are destroyed by the violence of war, the indignity of poverty, and the unrelenting devastation of disease. Her constant presence throughout Jesus' life and now death spoke of the powerful essence of motherhood but more it speaks of the intensity of a mother's love – Mary's love. As Mary stared at the evil incarnate character in the movie she showed the potency and depth of her faith in God and in her Son. Evil could not penetrate her and actually feared her presence. For too long Mary was never shown with such fortitude. The Church had placed her so high on a pedestal that most women and/or mothers could never really relate to her in any part of our lives. This particular movie only confirmed my belief and my feelings about a woman whose name is Mary and who became the mother of the Son of God. A woman who said yes to God when so many of us would have certainly hesitated and more than likely said no. Mary, like so many other women who become mothers, didn't know the outcome of saying 'yes' to motherhood but she most certainly didn't run scared when faced with the real depth of that 'yes.'

Jesus came into our world with a message - love; to love God with all our hearts and to love one another as ourselves. The movie did not depict such love. Its purpose was to show the last twelve hours of Jesus' life and the brutal ending of this Man. Yet for me, despite the violence featured throughout the movie the message of love did come through. The love both Son and mother had for each other and their message of love beyond themselves. Even now over 2,000 years later with all the violence and hatred that finds its way into our society and lives, we can still hold onto Jesus' message of love. There is no guarantee when we follow Him and His message of love that it will be an easy journey to follow. It certainly was not an easy journey for Mary to follow Jesus to Calvary but love is more powerful than fear. There is one thing certain - we won't be alone when we choose Jesus' message because a very special woman, whose faith and belief in her Son sustained her when every aspect of her life seemed futile and helpless. As we move forward in our lives, let us invite Mary to join us on our sacred journey of motherhood and help us live the message of love her Son gave us and not to be afraid to do so.

Have a Blessed Easter Celebration!

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