

# GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



It is no secret that there are a plethora of images of the Mother of God. These images capture various stages of Mary's life, her apparitions on earth, and the various devotions that have been created to bring Mary close to the human experience. It seems that each church has a different representation of Mary that captures the local community's devotion to Our Lady. Yet, there are some representations of Our Lady that can be a bit jarring when first seen. For me, it was the image of Mary, pregnant with Jesus. Until I was a pre-novice in the Order, I had never seen such an image.

In our Servite shrine church of Monte Berico, Italy there is a lovely representation of Mary, pregnant with Christ. She waits with hope and joy the long-awaited One who grows inside her. She is pregnant with the Word who speaks the Father's love and mercy to humanity. Her child will be the human face of God within the human experience.

As a faithful young Jewess, Mary knew the story of God's love affair with the Chosen People, her people. Even when the Lord was angry with His people, God remained faithful. God always hoped that His people would return to the covenant with Him. The prophetic utterances about the Messiah were God's way of reminding

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#### Vocation Newsletter

the people of His faithfulness to them. God's faithfulness was now growing in Mary. Her faithfulness to God was the welcome that God needed to make her the tabernacle to contain Him whom the whole world could not contain. He who now grew in her was the Promised One who would bathe humanity in the Father's loving mercy. His life would serve those whom He created. His blood spent for His people would bind them to God in a bond of love so tight that God would always love humanity. Mary, pregnant with the Christ, would show humanity the blessing of being faithful to God, for the Lord's faithfulness is the one constant in an ever-changing world that humanity can always rely on. Pregnant with the Long-Awaited Promised One, Mary's faith deepened, her love grew larger and her hope grew ever stronger. The image of the pregnant Mary is an image of the faithfulness of God that invites us to reflect on the Lord's love by patient waiting.

We live in a world that lives at an ever-increasing pace. Sounds get louder, technology gets faster, automobiles get





more intelligent and our homes are full of lots of things, most of which we use but once. In the collective human experience, there is an emptiness that is universal and individual in the same instance. We yearn to know love, but search for it in every place but in the heart of the Lord. Humanity has become too sophisticated for a God that cannot be seen. Humanity has become too sophisticated to see that the more it makes itself the center of everything, the deeper our emptiness grows. Yet, God is patient with us. In varied ways, He appears in our lives, filling the emptiness with love. But, in order to let divine love fill the emptiness, we need to welcome the Lord and His gift. This means that we need to realize that we are not the center of the universe. We are not the most important. This is okay, for we are loved individually by the God who created us in His image and endowed us with talents and capabilities beyond measure. Even in our stubbornness, selfishness and sin, the divine gift of love is never stunted or taken back. The emptiness in our experience is our choosing, not God's. Mary, pregnant with the Word of Life, invites us to experience life from a different perspective. She invites us to

worthy to carry His Son in our lives and souls through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This blessing is the reminder of God's enduring faithfulness. How blessed we are.

In this Advent and Christmas time, as we reflect on the Lord's love for us in the Divine Child of Bethlehem, let us accept the invitation of the Father to carry within us the Lord. May we let the Holy One grow within us and give birth to Him by acts of kindness and loving forgiveness. He comes to fill our emptiness. He comes to fill the emptiness of humanity. As our glorious and blessed Lady carried Christ in her womb and birthed Him to the world,



## Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. How do I give birth to Jesus in my life?
2. As I discern the Lord's call for my life, how do I give witness to the power of the Lord in my life?

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follow



stop for a moment and listen to the voice of the Father speaking words of love and mercy deep within our lives. These words remind us that no matter what, we are loved and this love will never be taken from our lives. We can choose to reject the gift of these words. God always chooses to speak them in spite of our choice. These words impregnate us with the Lord and, like Mary, we carry within us the Promised One. Our lives, our souls, become the new womb where God grows within us to save, bless and empower us to witness that, in the Incarnation, God weds himself to us in a covenant so strong that even God will never break it. God has found us

let us do so that the promise of peace may grow and flourish in our tired human experience. The pregnant Mary invites us to do what she did, and what she did gave life to the world. We are invited and called to do the same.

May the image of the pregnant Mary be our hope and give us courage to carry Jesus within us and birth Him by acts of love to our human experience. Our Lady, pregnant with Jesus, pray for us

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