

Who Is Our Lady of Mount Carmel?

a reflection by Peter Thomas, JPIC Team



Mothers are influential. My mother, whose name was Carmel did her best to teach me about kindness, generosity and reaching-out to those less fortunate. I've not always heeded her example, in fact on many occasions I've failed miserably. Mum rarely said an unkind word about people who society labeled as different; people not like us. The exceptions to this rule were politicians and any footballer who didn't play for her beloved Essendon, the Bombers. Respect was upper most in her mind and she did her best to instill that in me and my siblings. Mum was far from perfect but she was a wonderful teacher of values.

I'm sure that Mary of Nazareth did the same for her son; correcting him, guiding him, demonstrating kindness, giving him a set of values on which to base his life. Right now I hear you say but Mary's boy was Jesus the Son of God. True, but Jesus was also a boy, a young human male who would witness to his mother's faithfulness, dependability, kindness, moral integrity, sense of humour, intelligence and passion.

Who was Mary of Nazareth? Well there are two main answers because it largely depends on which Mary you are talking about, a Jewish peasant girl living in a backwater province

of the Roman Empire or the blue-cloaked Virgin Mary found in churches around the world.

It seems that like the contemporary woman in modern Australia work was not just limited to the house. Galilee, where Mary lived was the breadbasket of the Jewish Kingdom; there were orchards, olive groves and vineyards to be tendered and of course the grain crops. Women did a lot of the work in the fields.

When Mary was about eleven or twelve she began to menstruate, meaning that she was reaching a marriageable age so serious consideration would have been given to her choice of a husband. It's likely that Joseph was a young man, not much older than her and well-regarded by the small population of four to five hundred people who lived in Nazareth at that time. We know this because Matthew's gospel calls him 'just' or 'righteous'.

We know relatively little of Mary from the Gospels and yet we know a great deal about her from the life of her son. Through Jesus we experience her patience, strength and humility and it seems likely that the 'death and resurrection' motif as a myth of transformation would have been taught to the boy Jesus to help him traverse the world of his day.

The historical intensity on the emphasis on Mary's virginity is undoubtedly a stumbling block to the modern mind and to some married people an affront to their way of life. Yet happily we refer to Mary as ever-virgin all the while puzzled as to why this moniker continues to persist. Perhaps Mary's virginity means that she was healed and whole through recourse to that part of herself which remained uncontaminated by worldly considerations; that still, small voice of conscience that remained pure. All of us possess this 'virginity' but perhaps in Mary of Nazareth it was innate. This understanding does in no way preclude the traditional belief of perpetual physical virginity.

Mary's son witnessed to this interpretation of his mother's 'virginity' by appreciating her soft, devoted, sincere, receptive character, one which was true and innocent of worldly ways. *"If you belong to the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you do not belong to this world, therefore the world hates you."* Jn. 15. 18-19.

Melbourne's Kate Holden, author of the award-winning book *"In My Skin"* described herself as being 'immaculate'. A sex-worker, to pay for her heroin addiction she was adamant there was always a part of her that remained pure or as she eloquently termed, remained immaculate. Kate said that it was this 'immaculateness' that led her to redemption from a destructive way of life.

Probably the number one value that Mary shared was her devotion and fidelity to her marriage. Jesus would have witnessed the good and difficult times in his parent's relationship. So too would the dozen or so other people who probably lived in the same house. Living in those days was communal, unlike our modern nuclear family and unlike the pious 'holy family' references commonly referred to as 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph'.

Jesus would have taken the harder and more challenging moments of family and communal life and learned about relationships and change. All children learn from a very young age these important aspects of human connection by witnessing to their parent's interaction. A stability in family life is just one way, but perhaps the most important that Mary would build that solid foundation to launch Jesus into adult life from his home in Nazareth a small town situated in the midst of political instability. It was here in Nazareth in Galilee that the Romans threatened, fought and controlled. In a peace-loving home Mary and Joseph taught Jesus invaluable lessons about negotiating, work, marriage and in general essential life-skills.

At the Annunciation Mary is accepting, a virtue Jesus emulates as he espouses in adult life

the way of non-violence. Mary is exhorted by God's messenger not to be afraid, an attribute that would set Jesus on the path to peace-making. In the story of the Visitation, Mary reaches out to her cousin Elizabeth. Her prayerful life leads her to compassionate service. Jesus would have had this modeled to him throughout his childhood so as an adult we see in the gospels that he frequently sought out a lonely place for prayer before engaging in active acts of kindness.

Although there is feminine consciousness in female and male, women still are the main representatives of this awareness. Women hold the attitudes of receptiveness and acceptance, natural to mothers since the beginning of time. Mary's pregnancy and the subsequent birth of her son would bring about psycho-biological changes that demand adaptations and adjustments lasting for years on end. Mary the mother would have been no different to other mothers in that respect.

When her son was born Mary encountered what almost all mothers experience; falling-in-love! I know when my own children were born there was an inexplicable out-pouring of overwhelming pure love; your whole being is encapsulated with this feeling of joyousness. Like all mothers Mary's feeling would be with her throughout life and very likely enhanced her compassionate responses which her son would have felt in his nurture. This compassion was evident in the ways he touched, talked and restored those he walked amongst.

Mary was there at her son's death and she was there to bury him, the last act of a loving mother.

From all accounts Mary was a normal Jewish peasant woman but with an extraordinary capacity to nurture the principles and passion of a prophet, a teacher and a healer. For those of us who live in faith her son Jesus, a young boy of Nazareth is our Christ.



Saint Thérèse of Lisieux voiced her desire to be a priest in order to preach about the Blessed Virgin in a way more helpful than what she was accustomed to hearing...

'I'd first make people understand how little is known by us about her life.

We shouldn't say unlikely things or things we don't know anything about!

For a sermon on the Blessed Mother to please me and do me any good, I must see her real life, not her imagined life. I'm sure her real life was very simple.

They show her to us as unapproachable, but they should present her as imitable, bring out her virtues, saying that she lived by faith just like our selves '....

Her Last Conversations, John Clarke, ocd

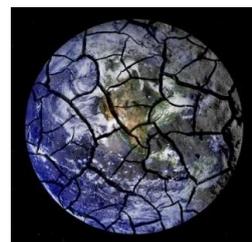
There are many world situations of injustice in need of our prayer. We invite you to make a commitment to pray for any of the following concerns. Allow God to direct any actions which may arise. Can you reach out by email, or letter to members of government; sign a petition, join a meeting or rally. Praying with action is a very valid way of embracing our world with God's love and compassion.

THE BISHOPS OF OCEANIA have joined a powerful appeal signed by six presidents of continental bishops' conferences, calling on government leaders to take ambitious and immediate action to tackle and overcome the devastating effects of the climate crisis. The Global Catholic Climate Movement reports that in the context of a recent United Nations IPCC report on the urgent need to develop policies that limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, Church leaders have called on politicians to work towards an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement for the people and the planet. They've asked for the next United Nations climate change conference in Katowice, Poland, December 2018, to prove a milestone in the path set out in 2015 in Paris.
<http://www.catholicreligiousaustralia.org/index.php/news-a-views/caring-for-creation/item/2768-oceania-bishops-join-worldwide-call-for-immediate-action-on-climate-change>.

THE 'COP 24' UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

As global temperatures continue to rise, climate action is lagging and the window of opportunity is closing. On Sunday 2 December 2018, the U.N. will start critical negotiations on how to address the problem collectively and urgently, during a two-week climate change conference in Poland, known as "COP 24".

According to [scientific research assessed by the IPCC](#), keeping global warming to no more than 1.5°C global average over pre-industrial levels, will help stave off devastating permanent damage to the planet and its people, including: the irreversible [loss of habitat](#) for animals in the Arctic and Antarctic; much more frequent instances of deadly [extreme heat](#); [water scarcity](#) that could affect over 300 million people; the [disappearance of coral reefs](#) which are essential for entire communities and marine life; sea level rise which is threatening the future and economy of entire [small island nations](#), etc



HUMAN RIGHTS DAY – 10th DECEMBER – Australia was a founding member of the UN and played a prominent role in the negotiation of the UN Charter in 1945. Australia was also one of eight nations involved in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, many human rights are still being ignored in many places. Can we call on our own governments to honour these agreements?? You may like to access the Carmelite NGO prayer booklet and pray for violations of these rights to be overturned by accessing the Carmelite website: <https://www.carmelites.org.au/ministries/justice-peace-integrity-of-creation>

#KIDSOFFNAURU: Thousands of Australians have campaigned, rallied, and signed petitions including members of our Carmelite Family to influence Government action to bring refugee children to Australia. Slowly the children are being removed and now there is only a handful left on the island. But more needs to be done to remove the men and women left there. You can access the Refugee Council of Australia for more information: <http://action.refugeecouncil.org.au/>

FOR YOUR CALENDAR – DECEMBER

1st Dec - World AIDS Day

2nd Dec-14th - **UN Conference on Climate Change
Katowice, Poland**

2 Dec – International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

3 Dec – International Day of Persons with Disabilities

9 Dec - International Anti-Corruption Day

**10 Dec- 70th anniversary of the adoption of United
Nations Declaration of Human Rights**

18 Dec – 1894: South Australian Parliament the first
in Australia to give women the right to vote

21 Dec – 25th Anniversary of the passage of the
Native Title Bill by the Australian Senate
(1993)

31 Dec – 1946: Granting of paid annual leave to
workers in Australia

*Almost anything you do will seem insignificant,
but it is very important that you do it.*

..... Gandhi

WE CELEBRATE THESE SMALL STEPS of many
hands working together to care for planet
EARTH:

Br Agedo (JPIC Team) has translated the
Carmelite NGO *Laudato Si* Adult Study Guide
into Tetum; Fr David at Carmelite
Communications has printed a good supply
and Provincial Paul Cahill with members of the
Province will personally transport them to
Timor Leste where Sr Mailyn Batocabe will
take delivery and introduce *Laudato Si* to
small groups along with her other Carmelite
Sisters at Hera and Beilako.