

Where does the term “Holy Name of Mary” come from? For the Hebrew people names were very important. Remember that Man shared in authoritative stewardship when he named all living things in the second story of creation. Compare that with man, not naming woman, but calling her by name. One is an act of dominion (Naming animals) as compared to an act of communion (Calling woman by name). Consider for a moment the names of angels. Did you know that each angel has a proper name which identifies their mission? To know the name of an angel is to know the exact goal and mission for which they were created for.

This is why the first act in the ritual of Baptism begins with “What name have you given your child?” That is a declarative moment that initiates a moment of a baby’s life in faith which is catalyzed and intimately linked with the parents. The “naming” act is important as well as names itself. Consider for a moment the naming of the precursor to the Messiah, the cousin of Jesus. At the circumcision of his son, Zechariah, writes (Since he was voiceless) that “John is his name’ after a moment those around him ponder and exclaim “what then of this boy?” They respond that way since there was no one in the family of Elizabeth and Zechariah named John. Consider the name of John which means “YHWH has been gracious” as compared to the meaning of Zechariah “The Lord has remembered.” If we consider the bold witness of John, as the new Elijah we can concur that God has indeed been gracious.

Like other typical Levite names, the name Miriam is probably Egyptian of origin, derived from a word that means **Beloved**. But a Hebrew audience, would have seen the name Miriam would have been linked to the purpose of myrrh the oil. In some scholarly writings the name Mary means “Oil of Gladness” or “Occasions that call for myrrh.” A deep understanding of the relationship of myrrh and the Hebrew people would lead us to a greater appreciation of the link between the Gospel of Luke and the narrative of Man and Woman in the garden (Genesis 2-3). There are many interpretations of the name of Mary. One such would lead to a combining of two Hebrew words which together would mean “A bitter drop in the sea.” Now matter which interpretation we trust it is apparent that the name of Mary is deep and filled with mystical and revelatory meaning.

From antiquity through today it is a customary sign of reverence to bow a head when certain names are mentioned. Whenever the name of Jesus is mentioned in a liturgical act it is never inappropriate to bow a head. In addition to the name of Jesus, the name of Mary often provokes a person to bow their head in respect, reverence and honor. Before we continue with this article remember that we should never be afraid of honoring Mary too much. We can never be more devoted to Mary than her Son.

Mary’s name is honored specifically in four ways: First, *Mary* is a name of honor, since the faithful praise Mary as the Mother of our Divine Savior; she is rightfully called “Mother of God,” for Jesus true God, second person of the Holy Trinity entered this world becoming also true man through Mary who had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, *Mary* is a most holy name, because the very mention of her name reminds us she is full of grace, has found favor with God, and is blessed among all women. Third, Mary is a maternal name, because she is our Mother, whom our Lord gave to us as He was dying on the cross (John19:26-27)

Finally, *Mary* is a name of the mother who responds to all of our needs, protects us from evil, and prays “for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.”

St. Louis de Montfort said, "... Christian peoples, who have chosen her as guardian and protectress of kingdoms, provinces, dioceses, and towns. Many cathedrals are consecrated to God in her name... no country or region without at least one of her miraculous images where all kinds of afflictions are cured and all sorts of benefits received. ... many are the orders under her name and protection; ... religious of all congregations who voice her praises and make known her compassion...' There is scarcely a sinner, however hardened, who does not possess some spark of confidence in her. The very devils in hell, while fearing her, show her respect."

Historically the term "Holy Name of Mary" became concretized through two ways.

First, the feast day of September 12 is linked with a military battle. In 1683, the Moslem Turks, under the leadership of Sultan Mohammed IV, continued their aggression against Christian Europe. In August, Christian troops passed the Shrine to Our Lady of Czestochowa, they begged the Blessed Mother's blessing and intercession. On September 11, the battle took place outside of Vienna with an army of about 76,000 men. The Moslem Turks retreated, but were followed by the Christian calvary. The vanquished Moslem Turks fled Austria (but only after slaughtering hundreds of hostages). Vienna and Christian Europe were saved.

Worshiping at a Holy Mass of Thanksgiving, the Catholic general fell prostrate and with outstretched arms declared it was God's cause and praised Him for the victory saying, "*Veni, vidi, Deus vicit.*" meaning "I came, I saw, God conquered!" On September 12th, the Christian army triumphantly entered Vienna. Pope Innocent XI declared September 12th as a date to honor Mary's Holy Name, whose maternal prayers had saved Christendom just as it had over 100 years earlier at the Battle of Lepanto (Our Lady of the Rosary).

Secondly, a wonderful saint in our faith coined the phrase "Holy Name of Mary" quite often. St. Bernard of Clairvaux (Simply put) was an abbot of the Cistercian tradition who was sent to revitalize and reform Benedictine monasteries. Bernard was named a Doctor of the Church in 1830. At the 800th anniversary of his death, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical on Bernard, in which he labeled him "The Last of the Fathers."

The central elements of Bernard's Mariology are how he explained the virginity of Mary, the "Star of the Sea", and her role as Mediatrix.

Theologians have called St. Bernard the "Troubadour of Mary." Troubadours were medieval poets and songwriters who spent their lives and livelihood proclaiming their love in a courtly manner. Upon reading the writings of St. Bernard the reader would conclude that he is indeed the "Troubadour of Mary!" He coined the phrased "Holy Name of Mary" with deep emotion and conviction.

The following is from a homily excerpt of St. Bernard is in the Office of Readings for December 20, the fourth week of Advent.

"You have heard, O Virgin, that you will conceive and bear a son; you have heard that it will not be by man but by the Holy Spirit. The angel awaits an answer; it is time for him to return to God who sent him. We too are waiting, O Lady, for your word of compassion; the sentence of condemnation weighs heavily upon us.

The price of our salvation is offered to you. We shall be set free at once if you consent.

In the eternal Word of God, we all came to be, and behold, we die. In your brief response we are to be remade in order to be recalled to life.

Tearful Adam with his sorrowing family begs this of you, O loving Virgin, in their exile

from Paradise. Abraham begs it, David begs it. All the other holy patriarchs, your ancestors, ask it of you, as they dwell in the country of the shadow of death. This is what the whole earth waits for, prostrate at your feet. It is right in doing so, for on your word depends comfort for the wretched, ransom for the captive, freedom for the condemned, indeed, salvation for all the sons of Adam, the whole of your race.

Answer quickly, O Virgin. Reply in haste to the angel, or rather through the angel to the Lord. Answer with a word, receive the Word of God. Speak your own word, conceive the divine Word. Breathe a passing word, embrace the eternal Word.

... Believe, give praise, and receive. Let humility be bold...O prudent Virgin, do not fear to be presumptuous. ... O blessed Virgin, your lips to praise, your womb to the Creator. See, the desired of all nations is at your door, knocking to enter... the One whom your soul loves. Arise, hasten, open. Arise in faith, hasten in devotion, open in praise and thanksgiving. Behold the handmaid of the Lord, she says, be it done to me according to your word.”

Consider the above quote. Basically St. Bernard is stating that the longest moment in history was during the angelic invitation (Annunciation) in which creation waited for a response from Mary. This may have been a minute, an hour or even a few seconds. However, since “By Him all things were created...all things were created through and for Him. (Col. 1:16)” it is safe to say that the centrality of Mary, humanity, the angelic and cosmic order as well as all creation needed the Incarnation which would only happen through Mary’s fiat. All of creation waited for that moment and all creation waited in that moment and history and the entire cosmic order have never been the same since that simple, bold, self-donating, sacrificial loud whisper of “Let it be done to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38) Mary’s mission was to bring forth Jesus (Theotokos- Mother of God). Through Baptism, Confirmation and unique vocations in life Christians are called to bring forth Jesus through participation in the acts of the family of the Baptized (Sacraments) and bringing Him forth through words and deeds. We may not “offer flesh to the Word made flesh” like Mary. However, our specific vocations are the unique, personal and intimate ways that God has chosen to love us and to love through us.

In the month of November, we have remembered every saint and every soul in Purgatory. Today’s Solemnity of Christ the King is a perfect time to reflect on our sharing in the eternal Kingdom as dependent on our willingness to help build of Kingdom of Heaven here and now. God the father does not desire slaves who have no choice, will or responsibility but rather sons and daughters who joyfully and willingly share in the work of the vineyard, the joys and sorrows and eventually the glory to be revealed. We are so loved and respected that we are given all we need to make a mini-fiat. Because of the unique call to holiness and sainthood the plan for the world today relies on the individual Christian accepting what they were conceived, born, baptized and made for which is “sainthood.” If Mary had not said yes no one else would have taken her place. And if you and I do not accept our place within the mission of Christ towards our families, spouses, and world no one else will. This is quite comforting and edifying. Among all the joys pastors have one of the most profound is watching a community and family share in the entire mission of the Church. God must truly love this Church, town and the local families if he put you here.