



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE* Wednesday, 10 May 2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!*

In our series of catecheses on Christian hope, today we look to Mary, Mother of Hope. Mary experienced more than one night on her journey as mother. Since her first appearance in the narrative of the Gospels, her figure stands out as if she were a character in a drama. It was not easy to respond with a 'yes' to the Angel's invitation: yet she, a woman in the flower of her youth, responds with courage, despite knowing nothing of the fate that awaits her. In that instant Mary appears to us as one of the many mothers of our world, courageous to the extreme when it comes to welcoming, in one's own womb, the history of a new man to be born.

That 'yes' is the first step in a long list of examples of obedience — a long list of examples! — that will accompany her journey as mother. Thus, Mary appears in the Gospels as a silent woman, who often does not understand all that is happening around her, but who contemplates each word and each event in her heart.

In this disposition there is a beautiful sample of Mary's psychology: she is not a woman who is depressed by the uncertainties of life, especially when nothing seems to be going the right way. Nor is she a woman who protests violently, who curses life's fate, which often shows us a hostile face. She is instead a woman who listens: do not forget that there is always a great connection between hope and listening, and Mary is a woman who listens. Mary welcomes life as it is conveyed to us, with its happy days, but also with its tragedies that we would rather not have met. Until Mary's supreme night, when her Son is nailed to the wood of the cross.

Until that day, Mary had nearly disappeared from the Gospel accounts: the sacred writers suggest this slow eclipsing of her presence, her remaining silent before the mystery of a Son who obeys the

Father. However, Mary reappears precisely at the crucial moment: when a large number of friends disperse out of fear. Mothers do not abandon, and in that instant at the foot of the Cross, none of

us could say which was the cruellest passion: be it that of an innocent man who dies on the gallows of the Cross, or the agony of a mother who accompanies the final moments of her son's life.

The Gospels are laconic, and extremely discrete. They record Mary's presence with a simple verb: she was "standing by" (Jn 19:25). She stood by. They say nothing of her reaction: whether she wept, whether she did not weep ... nothing; not so much as a brushstroke to describe her anguish: these details would be tackled later by the imagination of poets and painters offering us images that have entered the history of art and literature. But the Gospels only say: she was "standing by". She stood there, at the worst moment, at the cruellest moment, and she suffered with her son. She "stood by".

Mary "stood by"; she was simply there. Here again the young woman of Nazareth, hair now grayed with the passage of time, still struggling with a God who must only be embraced, and with a life that has come to the threshold of the darkest night. Mary "stood by" in the thickest darkness, but she "stood by". She did not go away. Mary is there, faithfully present, each time a candle must be held aflame in a place of fog and haze. She does not even know the future resurrection her Son was opening at that instant for us, for all of mankind: she stands there out of faithfulness to the plan of God whose handmaid she proclaimed herself to be on the first day of her vocation, but also due to her instinct as mother who simply suffers, each time there is a child who undergoes suffering. The suffering of mothers: we have all known strong women who have faced their children's suffering!

We will find her again on the first day of the Church; she, *mother of hope*, in the midst of that community of such fragile disciples: one had denied, many had fled, all had been afraid (cf. Acts 1:14). She simply stood by, in the most natural of ways, as if it were something completely normal: in the first Church enveloped in the light of the Resurrection, but also in the trepidation of the first steps that had to be taken in the world.

For this reason we all love her as Mother. We are not orphans: we have a Mother in heaven who is the Holy Mother of God. Because she teaches us the virtue of waiting, even when everything seems to lack meaning: she is ever confident in the mystery of God, even when he seems to have eclipsed himself due to the evil of the world. In the most difficult moments, may Mary, the Mother that Jesus gave to all of us, always support our steps, may she always say to our hearts: "Arise! Look forward, look to the horizon", because she is the Mother of Hope.

Thank you!

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the groups from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Finland, Mainland China, Indonesia, Taiwan, India, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I warmly welcome the Italian-speaking pilgrims. I greet the participants of the Ecumenical Week promoted by the Focolare Movement, and encourage them to continue their shared journey of unity, dialogue and friendship between religions and peoples.

I address a special greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Next Saturday marks the centenary of the Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima to the three shepherd children. Dear *young people*, learn to nurture devotion to the Mother of God with the daily recital of the Rosary; dear *sick people*, sense the presence of Mary at the time of the Cross; and you, *newlyweds*, pray to her so that your house may never be without love and mutual respect.