



## Part I

### *Attributes of Mary's Heart*

**P**art one of our Marian journey focuses on attributes of Mary's heart. The twenty-one attributes identified are not exhaustive. I'm almost certain that people could recommend many more characteristics of Mary's heart. Each of the reflections takes its inspiration from an aspect of Mary's life with Jesus as derived from the sacred scriptures. During this twenty-one-day journey, as we examine a different characteristic each day, the goal is to incorporate the day's attribute into your daily life. The aim of course is not isolated to one day only but to last for the rest of our lives—to live every day with a heart like Mary's. As you prepare to begin this journey, prayerfully ask Mary to pray for you as you strive to live and love as she did while on earth and still does from her throne in heaven.

*Day One*

# A Heart Patiently Waiting

## Scripture

*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.*

—Luke 1:26–27

## Reflection

If you search Google or your preferred Internet search engine for images of the annunciation, you will find likenesses captured by the great painters of history. Oftentimes these paintings contain projections of the artist from their historical time period, depicting Mary kneeling at a *prie-dieu* and reading from a codex book or praying the Rosary. Each of these paintings depicts Mary as a faithful daughter of Israel. She is the Daughter of Zion whom the prophets Zechariah (2:10, 9:9) and Zephaniah (3:14) foretold. As a Jewish woman, Mary waited with all of Israel for the coming of the promised one, the Messiah, who would save

them from their sins. She knew the Messiah would come, and so with her ancestors she waited.

Many of these artists depict Mary reading from a book, presumably the Old Testament. In that moment, as she patiently waited and read those sacred words, what did she read? Maybe she read the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, of how a virgin would give birth to a son and call him Emmanuel. Or maybe she reflected on the story of creation, of Adam and Eve, and how a woman would crush the head of a serpent (Gn 3:15). Perhaps she read about the enclosed garden in the Song of Songs (4:12) or Ezekiel's closed gate (44:2). If she read any of those passages, maybe she understood that soon they would be fulfilled. Israel's waiting would be over. For Mary is that Virgin; she is the new Eve; she is the enclosed garden; she is the closed gate.

The patient daughter of Israel is interrupted in her reading, in her reflection, by the angel who announces Israel must wait no longer. This patient daughter forces us who now read and reflect on the annunciation to wait, as St. Bernard of Clairvaux reflected, "The angel awaits your reply, for it is time that he should return to God, Who sent him. We, too, are waiting" (*Missus Est*, IV.14). When we gaze at those depictions, we patiently wait with the angel Gabriel for her answer, because salvation is at hand. Mary,

the one who reflected on God's word, receives the one who is *the* Word into her very being.

We live in a very fast-paced culture of drive-thrus and multitasking. When someone or something slows us down, we become impatient. Mary can teach us what it means to be patient. Mary also fits the other understanding of being patient: to tolerate. Mary is patient with us even today as she comes to earth with a message calling sinful humanity back to her son. We are slow to learn and understand, but with Jesus, she patiently waits for the conversion of our hearts. Sit with the example of Mary's patience, and ask how you can become more like her. Be patient while you wait for the revelation of God's plan for your life or for an answer to your prayers. Be patient with those around you. Allow Mary to teach you patience.

### **Prayer to Mary Our Intercessor**

Mary, my mother, give me a heart like yours; help me to patiently wait through life, especially as I wait for the day your son calls me home to be with him.

### **Today's Step toward Living with a Marian Heart**

Today when you find yourself impatient while waiting in line, stuck in traffic, or listening to another person, remember Mary and ask God for the gift of patience.

*Day Two*

# A Heart Seeking Clarity

## Mary Speaks

*How shall this be, since I have no husband?*

—Luke 1:34 (RSV)

## Reflection

It's not always easy for me to understand or accept what God is doing with my life. I sometimes find myself questioning him, thinking, "Really God? You want me to do what?" This was the case with my journey in the seminary. I went to seminary right out of high school. For two years that had been all I wanted for my life, and so I expected it to be the best experience of my life. But it wasn't. After just a few weeks there, I asked myself, "Did I make the right decision? Why did I come here?" At the semester's end, I applied to a college back home and left the seminary. I believed, "I gave God his chance, and now I can do whatever I want with my life." A little over a year later, God came knocking again. Even though I loved my new field of study, I found that it was not fulfilling me. As I thought

back, I realized the only thing that fulfilled me was doing churchy things! I started talking with vocation directors, and, well, I ended up back in the seminary. I was going to a different seminary, further away from my home, at a Benedictine monastery. In the days before I was to leave for the seminary, I began to doubt and question my life change: "God, do you really want me to go back to seminary? Don't you remember what it was like the first time? It's not for me. Why am I going to this seminary?" God answered all the questions I asked in the weeks, months, and years that I spent in seminary. I needed God to clarify what he was asking of me, and he did it in his time and in his way. Maybe you've found yourself in this same position of uncertainty. Such questions are not expressions of doubt in God's love, necessarily, but rather moments that require faith and trust in God's will.

When our hearts seek clarity, it means we have been listening for the voice of God in the recesses of our heart. If we were not listening to God, we would not have these questions. Mary listened intently to what the angel Gabriel said to her. After hearing she was to be the mother of God, she did not understand how it could be, for she had had no relations with a man. She probably thought to herself, "Really, God? You want me to do what?" Yet she asks the question and receives a response: "The Holy Spirit will

come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Lk 1:35). Another instance of Mary seeking clarity was at the finding of Jesus in the temple. She asks Jesus, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously” (Lk 2:48). She does not understand the situation, and so she seeks clarity from her Son.

In 1859, the Queen of Heaven appeared to Adele Brise in a small Belgian settlement near the Door Peninsula in Wisconsin. Adele sought clarity in two different ways: seeking counsel first from her parish priest and then from the Mother of God herself. Adele saw the Blessed Mother twice before she conversed with her heavenly visitor. After the second vision, which happened on the way to Mass, Adele knew she needed help, so she sought direction from her pastor. After sharing what transpired, he instructed her to ask the lady, “In God’s name, who are you and what do you want of me?” That’s precisely what Adele did. During the third apparition, Mary commended her for attending Mass and requested she make a general confession and offer her communion for the conversion of sinners. Then Mary asked Adele poignant questions, for which Adele sought clarity. Mary asked Adele, “Why are you standing here in idleness while your companions are working in the vineyard of the Lord?” Adele sought clarification: “What

more can I do, dear lady?" She listened but needed more information, and that is when Mary relayed the mission of catechesis to her: "Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation."

If there is some quandary in your life, know that you are not alone. Adele provides us with an example of what it means to seek clarity. Sometimes when God asks us to do something (or, in her case, the Blessed Mother does the asking) we might require guidance from a trusted person. Sometimes we might feel unqualified or believe the task to be impossible, and with Mary we might ask, "How can this be?" There is an answer to our question: God's wonderful and marvelous plan for us.

### **Prayer to Mary Our Intercessor**

Mary, my mother, give me a heart like yours, a heart seeking clarity, a heart listening to God's voice, so I can see God's marvelous plan for my life.

### **Today's Step toward Living with a Marian Heart**

Do you have a major decision to make? Is something weighing heavily on you? A friendship, a request to do something? Spend a few moments in prayer listening for the voice of God. Do not be afraid to ask God where he is leading you or what you are supposed to do.



*Day Three*

## A Chaste Heart

### Scripture

*A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed.*

—Song of Solomon 4:12

### Reflection

The Church teaches dogmatically that Mary was a perpetual virgin, meaning she remained a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus. Many theologians argue Mary took a vow of virginity before the annunciation, signifying that her heart was virginal, pure, and chaste.

Mary's chastity can inspire our modern-day culture, which perverts sexuality. Turn on any television show or movie today and you will surely find the glorification of immorality. Many characters engage in pre-marital sex, adultery, and polygamous relationships. There is your token homosexual, bisexual, or now transgender character. Such things have become so commonplace that we no

longer question it when we see it in the shows or movies we watch.

The proliferation of pornography continues to plague many men and women. Scientists now understand the harmful effects pornography has on a person: it rewires the brain. In addition to being genuinely addictive, pornography leads to objectifying women, to devaluing the dignity of the human person, and to viewing the other person as an object for gratification.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wisconsin, houses a beautiful mural of St. Maria Goretti. Many people know the story of St. Maria Goretti, who died as a martyr of chastity and purity. Alessandro, an eighteen-year-old with many issues, who lived nearby the Goretti household, became obsessed with Maria to the point that one day he attempted to rape Maria. Maria resisted the attack not only to defend her own chastity but also because she was concerned for the salvation of her attacker. She kept yelling to Alessandro, "It is a sin. God forbids it. You will go to hell, Alessandro. You will go to hell if you do it." Even though she was being attacked, her concern was for the eternal well-being of Alessandro.

Maria's resistance infuriated Alessandro, and he stabbed Maria fourteen times. The wounds were too much for Maria; she died the following day, after forgiving