

## How to wait

What are you waiting for? A more meaningful life? A better job? A physical healing? The completion of a project? A problem to go away? The conversion of a relative?

### Mary

Most people are obliged to wait for one thing or another. In the gospel you will find many blessed individuals having to bear their share of waiting. Mary is a prime example. The angel Gabriel appeared to her and announced:

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.”... And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (Lk 1:30–31, 38, RSV)

With her assent, Mary opened herself to much waiting throughout her existence. The carrying of Jesus in her womb for nine months was only the beginning.

### Jesus

When Jesus was twelve years old, Joseph and Mary discovered that their son was missing on their return from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. After a three-day search, they found him in the temple, asking the learned men questions and answering theirs, astounding them with his intelligence.

His mother complained, and he gave his answer:

“My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.” He replied, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Lk 2:48–49, NJB)

Jesus yearned to start doing his Father’s work; he wanted to get on with the vocation he felt he had; his family could hardly hold him back. Yet, even with his advanced intelligence and understanding, he consented to wait. And for almost two decades he studied and worked in Nazareth, quietly growing up, and patiently getting ready for his future task.

### The Apostles

The apostles waited too, though not for quite as long. Soon after his resurrection, Jesus commanded them to proclaim to all nations repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name. But first, he said:

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

(Lk 24:49, NIV)

They were to await the descent of the Holy Spirit. Not until Pentecost, several days later, were they to begin their mission. It was then that they burst forth in an explosion of power given from on high.

### How to Wait

Whatever we are waiting for, we should make the most of the intervening time.

How? Let us gain some skills in this matter from the apostles, from Jesus, and from his mother.

### Learn from the Apostles

After being told to remain in the city until the Holy Spirit came upon them, the apostles

“returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.”  
(Lk 24:52–53, NIV)

They stayed together. They benefited from each other’s company and support. They missed Jesus, but, in a group, they were able to cope. They did not go about carrying sad faces and forlorn hearts. They waited with joy; they praised God; they prayed in the temple.

When we have to wait, let us do the same: staying in community with holy friends. Let us help each other, and be joyful. Since worrying and fretting do not make things any better, let us try praising God together.

Let us reserve time for prayer, especially at church in the presence of Our Eucharistic Lord, adoring him, listening to him and following his guidance. He may be priming and grooming us for an assignment that only we can be trained to perform.

### **Learn from Jesus**

How did Jesus live before taking up his public ministry?

And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them... And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man. (Lk 2:51, 52, RSV)

Jesus placed himself under the authority of his father and mother. He lived in obedience. He remained hidden. It was not till about age thirty that he worked his first miracle at a wedding in Cana.

We, too, should be obedient to God our Father, and to Mary our mother: by keeping God’s commands recorded in the Bible, and by living the messages that Our Lady passed on through her many apparitions on earth over the centuries.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom.” Many of us, as we become older, hardly become any wiser. Day after day we make the same complaints. Week after week we shed the same tears. Month after month we hold on to our hatreds and conflicts, and deal with problems through the same futile routine. We moan and groan but seldom learn from our experiences.

Jesus, on the other hand, grew in wisdom. And not only that, he also increased “in favor with God and man.” He became more and more what his Father wanted him to be; he got along better and better with his fellow human beings.

Let us seriously examine how we can improve and enhance our way of life, and how we can enrich our relationship with God and with neighbour. If we are to mature like Jesus, we should read from the gospels every day, listening to what He says, and doing all that He tells us.

### **Learn from Mary**

What did Mary do after being informed that she would conceive and bear a son?

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town of Judah. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth... Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home.

(Lk 1:39–40, 56, NJB)

Instead of staying cooped up in the house, moping around, and worrying about her concerns and problems, Mary went immediately to visit her saintly cousin. She went outside, she travelled. She assisted in the preparations for the birth of John the Baptist.

In the same manner, while awaiting the arrival of a future event, we should not become totally isolated. Call on good people and friends. Visit them, and invite them to visit you. Go outdoors into the fresh air and open skies. And do not just sit in your room hoping for things to happen; start something yourself. Join your parish prayer group. Cultivate holy friendships. Volunteer some of your time and resources to help anyone who may be in need. Do not be miserly with your money.

Read the first chapter of the Gospel according to Luke and you will discover the special favour Elizabeth and Zechariah enjoyed in the sight of God. One can surmise that Mary went to see them also for the purpose of seeking their guidance. We, too, ought sometimes to ask for advice and council from a wise spiritual director, a priest, a nun, either in person or from good books or articles they may have written.

Judging also from the Spirit-filled nature of the meeting between Elizabeth and Mary (see Lk 1:39–55), we can speculate that they spent some of their time together in religious conversation and prayer. We, too, should daily devote time to pondering the things of God, and to praying.

### **The Hour of Deliverance**

Before Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph had to return to Bethlehem to be counted in the Roman census.

And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son.  
(Lk 2:6–7, RSV)

Just as the term of Mary's confinement came to completion, so will ours. The length of our waiting may be indefinite, but it is certainly infinite. We may have to wait nine months, or two decades, or a few days, but there will be an end to it all. There will finally be a moment of deliverance, of fulfillment. Then will our hearts overflow with such gratitude and peace.

Do not be impatient. Do not be cast down. Our day will come. It will come soon enough. Like the apostles, let us wait cheerfully and joyfully in prayer, supporting one another, and praising God for his far-sighted providence. Like Jesus, let us wait in obedience, improving ourselves spiritually and in other ways, growing in wisdom and in our relationship with God and with our neighbours. Like Mary, let us wait in doing good, making use of our time for the benefit of others, and getting ourselves refreshed and ready for what is to come.

Someday, like Mary, we too will give birth to Jesus – bringing Christ to those whom God has all along been preparing us to reach out to, and lead them to Him.