

# Jesus and Mary

Here are five examples of Jesus' sayings taken from the Gospel according to Luke.

1. At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." (Lk 10:21, NIV)
2. "When you pray, this is what to say: Father, may your name be held holy." (Lk 11:2, NJB)
3. "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Lk 18:14, NIV)
4. "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied... But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation." (Lk 6:21, 24, RSV)
5. And Jesus said to him [Zacchaeus], "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham." (Lk 19:9, NAB)

## Jesus' wisdom

The wisdom of Jesus may be quite puzzling, and offensive. It is woeful to be rich? We are blessed when we hunger? God hides things from the learned and from the wise but reveals them to lowly little children? No wonder his kinsfolk did not accept him.

He departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him?... Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary...?" And they took offense at him. (Mk 6:1–2, 3, NAB)

## "Where did this man get all this?"

Although Jesus is fully divine, he is also human in every respect except sin. And as a human being, he had to grow. We see in the gospel that he appeared first as a tiny baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, and it took many years for him to become a mature adult.

But not only did he grow physically, he also had to develop mentally and intellectually. The Bible tells us: "Jesus increased in wisdom." (Lk 2:52, NJB) He was not born with all his wisdom; he had to acquire it. And as a human being, he would gain true wisdom in the same way that other human beings do – by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the Holy Spirit works in us through many of our experiences; he teaches us through Scripture; he operates via some of the people we come in contact with – friends, acquaintances, teachers, priests and, perhaps in our early years, more than all the others, our parents! And Jesus most certainly received much of his wisdom by way of Mary and Joseph, for, as it is seen in the Bible, he "went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them." (Lk 2:51, NAB)

## **The Magnificat**

To illustrate Mary's influence on Jesus, let us look at the Magnificat. Mary said:

1. My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.
2. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown the strength with his arm.
3. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree.
4. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.
5. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever. (Lk 1:46–55, RSV)

## **Jesus and Mary**

Let us put the words of Jesus and his mother side by side, so that their similarities can be seen more readily.

1. At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

2. When you pray, this is what to say: Father, may your name be held holy. [God is holy means, among other things, that he is mighty, merciful, to be feared, full of strength.]  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown the strength with his arm.

3. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree.

4. Blessed are you that hunger now: you shall be satisfied... But woe to you that are rich: for you have received your consolation.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.

5. And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.”

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever.

### **An inspired canticle**

Some biblical scholars suggest that the words of the Magnificat were not Mary’s own. Others declare them to be a collection of hymns and sayings from the psalms and elsewhere. Still others maintain that it was not Mary who uttered them, but Elizabeth, her cousin. The evangelist, however, was moved by the Holy Spirit to attribute the song to Mary – showing his readers the sort of person she was, revealing her thoughts and ideals, and the type of wisdom she passed on to Jesus.

### **Jesus’ mother**

“What kind of wisdom has been given him? ... Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary?” (Mk 6:2, 3, NAB) How could Jesus be wise if he was merely the son of Mary? How could Jesus’ teachings be thought of as wisdom if he had only learned it from his uneducated mother? How could Mary know much if she lived such a solitary life in a little country village?

Our answer is this: it is precisely because he was the son of Mary, through her perfect communion and cooperation with the Holy Spirit, that Jesus was directed to appreciate this kind of wisdom. It is precisely because he was the son of Mary that Jesus was led to learn what he learned. It is precisely because he was the son of Mary that Jesus eventually taught this wisdom to his disciples.

The Bible affirms his wisdom: “And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.” (Lk 2:51-52, RSV)

By teaching her Son the wisdom she learned from the Holy Spirit, Mother Mary indirectly taught the world what was of importance, and what was not.