

SERMON – THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER – 1 MAY 2011
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

Instead of one of the readings from this Sunday's lectionary, I would like to use one from the Gospel according to Luke.

Luke 1:26-38 (KJV) *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*

Well today is the first day of May, May Day, the first day of Celtic Summer, Beltane. This was traditionally the day when some of my ancestors would begin to drive their cattle to the high meadows.

May Day. If you are as old as I am you may remember May Poles, May Pole dancing and the King and Queen of May.

May, the month of Mary, the month that we set aside to especially honor our Blessed Lady.

We honor, we venerate the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God, the Theotokis, the God-Bearer. We do not worship her but we venerate her. Without Mary we would not have had our Savior, Jesus. Without her total obedience to God we would not have Christmas nor would we have the Easter Season.

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

God chose Mary as He chooses each one of us for a particular task. In her case it was special. He chose this barely thirteen year old girl to become the Mother of the Christ, the Messiah. She could have refused but she didn't. Instead she replied to the Angel Gabriel, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*

Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.

In other words, Whatever is your will, God, I will do it.

Complete obedience, without hesitation to the will of God.

We honor her first as the Mother of God and we honor her for her perfect submission to God's plan of salvation.

Her obedience was not without cost, without sacrifice. Why do you think that Mary went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, in her sixth month of pregnancy? Don't you imagine that it was because at that point it was apparent that she was pregnant? Things then were as things were at one time here. "Oh yeah! That baby's a gift from God!"

Sort of like the old limerick about the Girl from Cape Cod, huh?

She almost lost her fiancé, Joseph. It took God's intervention to keep that on track.

But she was obedient. She accepted the will and the commandment of God.

Jesus tells us in **John 15:10-13 (KJV)** *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

Jesus asks us obey him, to obey God, not by a set of rules or regulations but by love.

The Virgin Mary obeyed God not because she had to but for no other reason than perfect love.

You and I share in that. You and I both should obey God's commandments to love Him above everything else with all of our being, to love our neighbor as ourselves and to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

Just as Mary carried Jesus for nine months, we are to not only carry Jesus but to allow him to live within each one of us.

Let us all especially this month remember our Blessed Lady, the Virgin Mary.

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!

Amen.