



## Mary the Young Woman, Model for Today's Youth

**World Youth Day** celebration is a powerful moment in which the young people of the world come together to encounter the person of Christ who is eternally young. They can learn from him how to be bearers of the Gospel, the good news to other young people. It is open to all young people who want to take part in a festive celebration centered on the person of Jesus Christ together with other young people from across the Globe.

### **Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea (Lk, 1:39)**

The Gospel passage chosen for the World Youth Day 2023 celebration is laden with youthful characteristics. Preparing oneself for the mission and assuming one's responsibility with proficiency is a very important aspect in one's life. Being professional in one's own field and contributing to one's best ability for the betterment and welfare of the society, the community and the world at large is the need of the hour.

**Mary got up:** Indicates her readiness to be of service to others in need. Her thoughts turned to Elizabeth. She got up and went forth, into the world of life and movement. Her youthful human qualities are par excellent model for the young people of today to imitate; she is alert, alive, awake and aware that her cousin Elizabeth needed her service. Hence, she made a swift decision, to render her help to Elizabeth. Mary becomes a temple of God, an image of the pilgrim Church, a Church that goes forth for service, and a Church that brings the good news to all!

The Lord is inviting the young people of today, to get up from the comfort zone, from slumber of **I, me and myself** to the limberness of **we, us**, and to reach out in haste to the needy, the less fortunate group of our community, society and the whole human family.

**Mary went in haste:** When the angel Gabriel told her about Elizabeth's pregnancy; Mary wastes no time and sets out in haste, to see for herself what the Angel has told her. Mary's haste is thus a sign of her desire to serve, to proclaim her joy, to respond without hesitation to the grace of the Holy Spirit. Mary was motivated by the needs of her elderly cousin. She did not hold back, or remain indifferent. She thought more of others than of herself, and this gave enthusiasm and direction to her life.

**Mary hurriedly prepares for a trip to meet her cousin Elizabeth.** "She went with haste" speaks of her *eagerness, zeal, zest, caring and diligent attitude*. The haste of Mary, the young woman, is the haste of those who have received extraordinary gifts from the Lord and feel compelled to share them, to let the immense grace that they have experienced be poured out upon others. It is the haste of those capable of putting other people's needs above their own. Mary is an example of a young person who wastes no time on seeking attention from others – as often happens when we depend on our "likes" on social media. She sets out to find the most genuine of all "connections": the one that comes from encounter, sharing, love and service. Mary with her genuine love, concern, positive attitude towards life generated new hope in her cousin Elizabeth. This whole experience cannot help but be stimulating, coupled with enthusiasm, great sense of urgency and joy.



**To a town in the hill country of Judea:** Indicates, a long, lonely and difficult journey; this speaks of Mary's courage, determination and daring spirit. It speaks of her readiness to face the hardships, challenges, take risks, in order to be of help to the others in time of their needs. This shows how Mary put others first, before her own self.

When Mary arrives at the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth, a marvellous encounter takes place! Elizabeth herself had experienced miraculous intervention from God, who gave her a child in her old age. She would have had every reason to begin by talking about herself, yet she was not "full of herself", but anxious to welcome her young cousin and the fruit of her womb. As soon as she heard Mary's greeting, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Such surprises and outpourings of the Spirit come about when we show true hospitality, when we put others, not ourselves, at the centre.

God is inviting the young people of today to venture into the exciting surprises of the Lord with firm faith, courage and fortitude to travel the lonely, difficult, risky yet secure path the Lord has traced out for everyone. Mary of Nazareth, the youth, did it and she is showing the path to all the young people of today to do their part.

Pope Francis continuously highlights the importance of **fraternal relationship** between the young and the elderly, which are reciprocal, as both have a lot to give and take from each other.

In the case of Mary and Elizabeth, their meeting was **fraternal, reciprocal**; vibrating that connection of vitality and understanding between them, as both received special blessing/favour from God, and are entrusted with specific mission to be fulfilled.

The examples, experiences, and affectionate encountered of Mary and Elizabeth, is an invitation for all of us young and old, to build that **fraternal relationship** and to look towards the future with hope and responsibility. To be individuals who are service minded and grace filled like that of Mary and a matured, life experiences like that of Elizabeth. The lives of Mary and Elizabeth are truly a call for all of us today to believe that, God speaks, and according to His Word, He acts always.

**World Youth Day celebration** is a unique way to deepen our faith and grow closer to Christ, through prayer and the sacraments, together with other young people who share the interests and ambitions. It is commonly celebrated in a way similar to many events. The most emphasized and well-known traditional theme is the unity and presence of numerous different cultures. It is done through chants, music, prayer, celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, reconciliation opportunities, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and many other youthful ways of celebrating faith life in God, and singing of Catholic themed songs from various cultures.

**World youth day celebration** is an opportunity to personally experience the universality of the Catholic Church, and to share with the whole world the hope of many young people who are committing their lives to Christ and to His Church.

**When we have Christ within us, we cannot keep it for ourselves; we ought to share that joy with others. That is what Mary did and she invites us today to become more evangelical in living and proclaiming Christ in our daily life.**

## References

1. Word of God
2. Message of Pope Francis for the XXXVII World Youth Day 2022-2023



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