

Sermon Given at the Anglican Parish of Kingscliff & Pottsville, 16 August 2026
Feast of Mary, Mother of the Lord

Title: Mary: Our Mother and Ancestor in Faith -*Obedience, Mission and Praise*.

Introduction & The Middle Path

It's very moving to read and hear that our Lord Jesus Christ entered into this world like all of us here, through a mother. He took flesh and became one like us in all things but sin. What a wonderful consolation for us: Our God became what we are so we can become what He is (St Athanasius). Martin Luther the reformer said that every Christian should have God as their Father, Jesus as their Saviour and brother, and Mary as their mother.

In our world today, so many people appear to be orphans—they have no spiritual foundations, and that is why they are adrift and lost. We need our spiritual parents and ancestors to persevere, to live life to the full as Jesus promised. Otherwise, we settle for a half-life that never truly satisfies.

We all know the extremes. Some Christians elevate Mary almost to the level of God, which is wrong. Others dismiss her altogether, which is equally sad. I believe the healthy path is in the middle. Mary is not God, but neither should we dismiss her. We call her blessed, seek her maternal intercession, and seek to imitate her faith. We do not pray to her as God; we ask her to pray for us, just as we ask our friends and loved ones to pray for us. In honouring Mary, we fulfill her own words: "From this day forward, all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48).

Personal Testimony

With that little preamble, I would like to share my personal relationship with Mary, and then offer you three ways we can emulate her as disciples of her Son.

I grew up as a Roman Catholic in Nigeria, where popular devotions and pious activities are the norm. Praying the rosary was part of my upbringing, and visits to Marian shrines and places of apparitions were also the norm. I have kept that as an integral part of my Christian Anglican spirituality to this day.

My love for St Mary and my personal relationship with her grew profoundly when I came to Australia 23 years ago. A few months after arriving, I needed a difficult hernia operation, but because I was on a bridging visa and had no medical insurance, I could not find a doctor willing to treat me. I prayed and asked Mary to intercede for me.

A parishioner in Yarralumla, an anaesthetist, offered his services free of charge and helped me find a surgeon, Dr Tait, who agreed to perform the operation. Remarkably, the surgery took place on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

I experienced Mary's intercession in a deeply personal way. Since then, my relationship with her has grown ever deeper. She has accompanied me throughout my life with her prayers and love, especially in the most challenging moments, always leading me closer to her Son, Jesus.

Now, let us look at three ways Mary models discipleship for us.

Obedience: Mary Obeys God

First, Mary obeys. Her Fiat—"I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word"—is utterly exemplary. She didn't play the "I am not worthy" game. She didn't make excuses. She simply accepted God's plans for her.

St. Augustine said something profound: "Before Mary conceived Jesus in her womb, she first conceived him in her soul." We, too, are called to conceive God in our souls by giving our own Fiat. That means surrendering to his plans for your life, even when it is scary. This is very hard in our culture of excessive control and fierce independence, but Mary shows us that true freedom is found in saying "Yes" to God.

Mission: Mary Walks

Second, Mary walks. The Gospel tells us she went with haste to see her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45). Christians are called to go out—into the existential and geographical peripheries of our world—to meet Jesus in others.

Mary's journey was the first ever Eucharistic procession; she carried Jesus within her to attend to the needs of her cousin, who was pregnant in her old age. Another Mary, St. Mary MacKillop, whose feast we celebrated last week, puts it aptly: "Never see a need without doing something about it." Every encounter with God leaves us with a mission. Archbishop Rowan Williams once said that obedience is not about following rules, but about opening our lives to a new landscape that God is showing us. Our world and our Church, in these trying times, more than ever, need missionary disciples—men and women whose hearts have been touched by the Holy Spirit, so that their hearts can touch the hearts of our contemporaries.

Praise: Mary Sings

Third, and finally, Mary sings and praises God. The *Magnificat* (Luke 1: 46-55) is her song of praise, joy, and holy humility. Her song speaks about a God who turns things not just upside down, but the right side up. It speaks about a God who overturns the non-negotiable status-quo of this world: casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly.

When we sing God's praises, we are not ignoring our problems; we are declaring that God is bigger than them. Mary teaches us that a disciple is someone who worships in the waiting, who magnifies the Lord even when the path ahead is unclear.

Conclusion

So, as we honour Mary as our ancestor in faith, let us ask for her prayers. Let us obey like her, with a surrendered heart. Let us walk like her, hastening to serve those in need. And let us sing like her, trusting that God is bringing justice and mercy to the world.

May we, like Mary, conceive Jesus in our souls, carry him to others, and praise him with our whole lives. Amen.

The Rev'd Constantine Osuchukwu, AMDG, 16 August 2026