

Mary's resistance

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We are used to the picture of the family of Jesus that we see at Christmas time: the brave, young Mary, ready for whatever God has in mind for her. Kind Joseph, who plans to leave pregnant Mary, but is convinced to stay beside her. The couple fleeing the murderous Herod.

And then, perhaps, a few weeks later, we might see the young Jesus who stays behind to learn a bit more in the Temple in Jerusalem. In some lectionary years, we see Mary imploring Jesus to save a wedding where the wine has run out; Jesus says he's not ready, Mary persists, and Jesus puts aside his own plans and transforms water into wine.

Or maybe we're used to the Mary that we see around Easter, particularly the weeping mother at the foot of the cross.

We're likely not familiar with the Mary that we see in [Sunday's Gospel](#), the Mary who hears the rumors of her son's madness and comes to try to get him to change course.

What's going on here? Is she embarrassed? Did she not know that being the mother of the Messiah might mean some embarrassment when the neighbors started talking?

When Gabriel appeared to Mary and gave her an outline of the plan that God had for her, she probably didn't envision the Jesus that appeared some 30 years later. Her whole culture trained her to look for a different messiah, perhaps a messiah who cleansed the Jewish homeland. She probably thought of that cleansing in military terms, the ejection of the Romans, perhaps.

She likely wasn't thinking of a spiritual revolution.

Or perhaps Mary was upset because she saw her son was on a collision course with any number of authorities. Maybe she wanted him to fly under the radar more.

Even if Mary understood God's plan thoroughly, she still might want to protect her child. That's what good parents want, to save their children from harm and destruction. She still might protest the fact that the salvation of the world required the precious life of her beloved child.

For those of us struggling to chart our own course, we might take comfort from Sunday's Gospel. If even the family of Jesus didn't fully embrace his path, we, too, can expect a bit of resistance.

For those of us struggling to live an integrated life, where our weekday selves don't contradict our Christian values, we can take courage from Sunday's Gospel. It's not an easy task, this living an authentic life.

Of course, the Gospels don't promise us a happy ending. Even if we live honestly, we may find ourselves on a collision course with the larger world, with the forces of empire, with the culture that shoots other messages at us and infuses our surroundings with poisonous values. Even authentic people can end up martyred.

In fact, authentic people are more likely to end up martyred. But throughout the Gospels, Jesus promises that the life we achieve through our integrity will be worth the price.

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