

Blessed Is She Who Believed

July 1, 2023, IHM Chapter

During WWII, **not only the Jews,**

but also other groups were persecuted by the Nazis,
including **Catholics, disabled persons, and gypsies.**

The story is told of a gypsy family

who was part of a traveling circus in Poland.

During one of their acts,

a young girl would jump from a high wire,
with no net below into her father's arms.

One morning, the father had gone out early

and the young girl was alone in the apartment building
where they were staying.

A stranger came to the door and said

that he had a message from her father.

The message was that the Nazis had come into the town

and they had to escape.

Since it was too dangerous for the father to return by daylight,

he would return at two in the morning

stand at the northwest corner of the apartment building.

His daughter was to jump, and he promised to be there

to catch her so that they could escape.

The young girl was confused.

She didn't know the messenger.

She wasn't sure these were the words of her father.

She wasn't even sure

which was the northwest corner of the building.

But as the day went on, her father did not return

and she began to hear news

that the Nazis had indeed come into the town.

Having only the word of her father's promise,

she went to what she hoped

was the northwest corner of the building
at the exact time she was told
and called into the darkness,
"Father, are you there?"

Immediately she heard her father's voice:

"Yes, I'm here. Jump! I'll catch you."

The girl cried, "But, father, I can't see you."

"I know," her father called, "I know. But I can see you!"

And the little girl jumped safely into her father's arms.

This story speaks **of a trust so strong and complete**
that it is almost too **hard to believe**.

The young girl knew from experience that her father
could catch her whenever she jumped from the high wire.
But now, in the dark, in this life-and-death moment,
she had to trust him even more, beyond what she knew.

She had to believe in his words,
in a promise that would not be fulfilled
until she jumped and was caught.

As remarkable as this story is,
how much more remarkable is Mary of Nazareth
who believed that what God was promising her
through an angel would be realized.

This is what her cousin Elizabeth joyfully announced to her:

*"...blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."*

Reflect for a moment the utter trust
in Mary's simple response to the angel, *"Let it be with me as you say."*
Gabriel did not leave her with a **"Here is your life"** scenario.
No details whatsoever.

Never told her she would **become a refugee** with her infant
to escape a king's anger.

Never told her that, when **her child grew up**,

some of his relatives would think him mad,
that his hometown neighbors would try to cast him over a cliff.
Never told her what aging Simeon foretold later,
*"This child is marked for the fall and the rise of many in Israel,
to be a symbol that will be rejected –
indeed, a sword shall pierce you too"* (Lk 2:34-35).

Never told her that her son would die shamefully
on a cross between two thieves,
but not to worry, for he would rise from the dead.

God asked Mary only this, *"Trust me."* And she did. Totally!

That's why Luke portrays Mary as the perfect disciple.

Jesus would make that clear later on:

*"My mother and my brothers are those
who hear the word of God and do it"* (Lk 8:21).

Mary listened, and Mary did.

It's no surprise that in the Christian tradition

Mary has long been seen as the **"woman of faith."**

And this woman of faith invites us to trust, as she trusted,
that *"what the Lord has promised [you and I] will be fulfilled,"*
will come to pass, will be realized.

But we know this is not easy.

As with Mary, so with you and me!

In Christ, **God has not provided** us with a scenario for our lives,
a forecast of what will happen to any one of us.

God did not tell us what color our skin would be,
whether we shall live in poverty or plenty,
in love or rage, when we shall die, and how.

We can't even predict our tomorrows.

We only have the words of the angel to assure us:

"The power of the Most High," God's holy Spirit,
will always *"cast a shadow over you"* (Lk 1:35),
the shadow that is a sign of God's presence.

I began my homily today with a story

about a young Gypsy girl who jumped safely
into the arms of her loving father.

I first told that story in October 2010

during a Novena service to Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

One month later, after I told that story,

I received a note who had been at the Novena that day.

She wrote:

My sister Kathleen was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She struggled for six months. Last Saturday, she slipped into a coma. My mother, my sisters, Anne and Mary, and I had been saying all the traditional prayers, and still, Kathy fought to stay with her family. As evening came, my brother-in-law asked me if I could say something. I suddenly remembered your story of the young Gypsy, and I simply said, "Jump, Kathy. Jump. He can see you." Several minutes later, she died quietly in God's tender embrace.

What can we do?

Develop a habit of quietly speaking the words of Mary

at her Annunciation, **"Do with me whatever you want, Lord!"**

or the words of her son Jesus on the cross:

"Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit" (Lk 23:46).

Both are words spoken in loving trust, moments of total surrender.

Learn to speak these words not just in moments of difficulty or fear,

not only in times of uncertainty;

buy now and always.

Whether you can see God is not all-important.

He can see you, **always.**

So, trust God's presence with you always and jump!