

Tape 13, Side A

You and I and everyone that lives is a creature of history. Human life has taken place before us. Which human life affects our life in so many ways that we cannot possibly know? Totally beyond our ability, some things we can see but so much of what is history before us we simply can never know and yet it is affecting us. Human beings are creature of memory. They not only remember their own past, when I was a child or when I was 25 or when I was in this city or that, but collectively they remember at least a piece of what has gone even before they were alive. Human beings are creatures of memory.

Now, history is not just human events that have taken place right up the time that we existed and during our lives. For the Christian, history is the history of God's providence working for the salvation of all. History is salvation history. People are in history in order to ultimate to be brought into an eternal graced union with God. History is made up of persons and events, and therefore salvation history, God's working in history to affect you and I and other people is done through persons and events. Abraham, for example, and Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah, these are all person who indeed are persons like ourselves, who indeed we have a memory of from the past of some nature, but they are also persons that God is working through in order to bring salvation to the world. In order to bring humanity into that eternally graced union with him forever. However, there is a dimension of salvation history that a large percentage of Christianity and even a large percentage of Catholicism today seemingly does not want to deal with, wants to ignore, perhaps wants to make believe it's not there or it's not important, yet it is there and the slightest reflection can show us it's terribly important.

What I am talking about is the person of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and the process of salvation history. As a person in God's plan moving through history that cooperates with God, and through that cooperation helps move humanity towards that eternally graced union with love itself. Now there are all kinds of reasons by so many Protestants and, today, so many Catholics turn away from Mary, turn off from Mary. And just like with so many other things we have to examine our conscience and see if it's really their fault. The abuses to which Mary has been put by various people in the church, for example, the use of Mary as someone who will lead people to victory in war has been going on in the church for a long, long time, a thousand perhaps 1500 years. The Orthodox go out to battle with icons of Mary. Catholics, of course, do the same thing. That is an abuse, that is an abuse. That is not the truth of the matter. There are other abuses, for example, Protestants and other Catholics accuse Mary of becoming a substitute form of Christianity because Mary has no content. She does not teach the Sermon on the Mount. She has no teachings, and therefore she can be used for any teaching. They see Mary as a way of people avoiding the seriousness of what Jesus said and still thinking they are participating in Christianity.

Now all these things of course, for example, the use of the Merriam cult in Latin America and South America as a way to prop up gruesome dictatorship. Utterly unacceptable, utterly unacceptable. But all the abuses do not change the historical fact and the fact of faith. Mary has a special place in God's plan of salvation. Let's talk about the only Mary that we have any authentic, church approved, revelatory knowledge of for all of Christianity, and that Mary is the biblical Mary, the Mary of the New Testament. Stories of Mary and so forth abound, but the

point is the only Mary that anyone has to have in terms of salvation is the biblical Mary, and all stories of Mary have to be consistent with that or else they are fraudulent. As everything else has to be consistent with the New Testament or else it is fraudulent Christianity. And so let us look at the biblical Mary. The first moment, the very first moment we hear of Mary her Hebrew name is Merriam, the very first moment we hear of Mary is at the annunciation. As we spoke about earlier in another conference, what is asked of Mary at the annunciation is an ordeal none of us would want to be put through. A terrible crises of following God's will and the danger of the risk of being placed in a social situation that could be lethal, and if not lethal could be destruction of someone emotionally, psychologically, socially her entire life, to become an unwed mother. But Mary responds at the annunciation with the critical act of faith, the critical act of trust, the critical yes. She says, be it done unto me according to thy word. In the face of all the dangers involved in that particular situation, and we cannot, there are no words to suggest the extremity of what it meant to be an unmarried young woman with child in that patriarchal society. Every day in that society, everyday in formal prayer in the synagogue and in the temple at Jerusalem, everyday men offered prayers thanking God they were not women.

Now we're talking patriarchy here. Women were none persons. They were totally owned by some male someplace. Not owned like money, not slavery, but they had to be attached to some man someplace. It wasn't a lack of voting rights it was a lack of any rights. And therefore, in the dark world where women become the scapegoats for male problems or problems that are partially male problems at least, being an unwed mother brought forth terrible possibilities. And Mary accepts that because it's God's will, with no way to explain it.

The next time we see Mary she is going to visit Elizabeth, her cousin. Now I ask you who, biblically now, who in the New Testament outside of Jesus himself, who in the New Testament speaks anything of this quality of poetry, of this depth of profundity. As a matter of fact, what other speaker in the gospel even has this length of talk. Now I know what people are going to say, what scripture scholars say, they say Mary never said it, because most of these lines come from the Old Testament. That's irrelevant, because the gospel was written 40 to 50 years after Jesus, and 40 and 50 years after Jesus the community still had such a tremendous respect for Mary that they put this in here. And we all know what it is when Mary visits Elizabeth. No one outside of Jesus has this quality of speech in the New Testament, in the gospels. My soul doth magnify the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. He has looked upon his servant in her loneliness and people forever will call me blessed. The mighty one has done great things for me. Holy is his name. From age to age his mercy extends to those who live in his presence. He has acted with power and done wonders, and scattered the proud and conceit of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up those who are lonely. He has filled the hungry with good things, and he has sent the rich away empty. He held out his hand to Israel his servant for he remembered his mercy even as he promised our fathers, Abraham and his descendents forever. The magnificate. That's Mary's speech when she goes to Elizabeth. That's biblical. No one else in the gospel has anything of that poetic quality except Jesus.

And then the next time we see Mary she is traveling on to Bethlehem and going to Bethlehem. She's nine months pregnant, and like any mother she has to be worried about the child. I mean some people, I suppose, would say at nine months pregnant, you know I can't go from Galloway to Dublin on a bus. This is Nazareth of Bethlehem on a donkey, and she does it. And then we

see her at the birth where Jesus is born, and born in a stable. That's not where people, even poor people aren't born there. Didn't worry about the child. I mean after all you bond with a child, if you're a woman during those nine months of pregnancy you bond deeply with the child. And didn't she worry about her child being cold and being sick, being born among animals in a place that just was a stable. And then we see that she brings the child up to the temple, and there they meet Simian, and Simian takes the child and then we know the famous quote, "This child is destined for the rise and fall of many in Israel, and your heart a sword will pierce." So she's -- there's a prophecy that she's going to suffer. And then the next thing we hear is, she has to become a refugee to save Jesus. She has to go to Egypt to save him. It's no joke, a refugee isn't like you're a tourist. A refugee is in a world where you don't know the language, where you don't know the streets, where you don't have a job, where you don't have any friends. A refugee is a hard lot, and she does it for Jesus. And then they return to Nazareth and Jesus grows in age and wisdom and all the things that have to be done by a mother with a child are done. She washes him, she bathes him, she teaches him how to eat, walk, etc., etc. And of course, because the father is working and so forth, he learns about life and he learns how to live from Mary, because Jesus is human in all ways like us except sin, and therefore he learns like a human being. And then we see that strange incident, the incident in the temple. Joseph and Mary had said, went down to the temple every year to celebrate the Passover, and this year, the 12th year after Jesus' birth they go down and on the way back in the caravan they're a days journey out before they find out that Jesus is not with them. And note the words that he used, that Mary and Joseph return to the temple and searched sorrowfully. Mary is no Hindu yogi. Mary is no detached person that doesn't care. Mary is a person that loved. She loves her child, and everyone of us knows what that means, searched sorrowfully. The anguish that the child has been kidnapped because there were pirates in those days that took children for slavery, or hurt, or molested, or beaten or killed, or lost forever in just a mass of the people that come to the Passover. She searched sorrowfully, she loved as a human being. She was not simply some kind of detached statue. She was intimately involved in what it means to be human. She loved her child. And then, we see Mary at Canaan. We see Mary at Canaan, and is this an accident or is providence. Is this salvation history? Is this God leaving something to us to tell us something? And at Canaan Jesus performs his first miracle at the request of Mary. Is that an accident or is that something that in the divine plan is meant to communicate biblically now, biblically something that every Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox has to accept. This is all in the New Testament. And she's there and the first miracle is performed at her request.

You remember the story of the miracle. They are at a wedding, a normal wedding. Jesus is there, Mary is there, the disciples are there. They run out of wine. You're having a celebration and you run out of wine and the bride and the groom and everyone in the family, they are all upset. We understand that, you know. First of all they look bad. Jeez, they didn't buy enough. They're cheapskates. Then the second thing they think of, jeez better not to have started drinking than to run out at this point. People are going to be mad and upset. It's a human problem. It's no great problem in terms of altering the course of history. It's just human being with difficulty, and they go to Mary and Mary comes to Jesus and she explains. If you remember the story, she explains they are out of wine, they need wine. And he says to her, what would you have me do, my time has not come. And she doesn't even answer him. She just says to the stewards, do whatever he tells you. The total assumption of the story is he is going to do something because she asked and she's the mother. So then she says, if you can imagine the situation, you've got

people running out of wine and everyone is in a high anxiety of what's going to happen and Mary goes to Jesus. Jesus says, what do you want me to do? It's not my time hasn't come. Don't you know that? And then she goes over to the porters, with no wine in the place, she tells the porters take those five stone jars, which would have been about 20 gallons each, take those five stone jars and fill them up with water. Now we've heard the story so much that we've lost context of how absurd that is. Imagine if you were at a wedding and they ran out of liquor and someone said, here fill all the pitchers up with water. They think they're crazy. It makes no sense. But remember, remember before that happens what Mary says to the stewards. She says to the porters rather, she goes over to them and she says, do whatever he tells you. And then he tells them fill up the five stone jars and they fill them up. How did these people when they were pouring water, ladling water into five stone jars. If you can imagine them thinking among themselves, this is the nuttiest thing we've ever done. But they remember what Mary said. All she said to them was, do whatever he tells you, and so they do it. And now they have just poured five jars, 100 gallons of water is in front of Jesus, they know it's water because they poured it in. And then he says to them, take out a ladle and take it to the chief steward. Take a ladle of water to the chief steward, this is craziness. Can you imagine what's going on in their heads. What are they thinking? But they remember what Mary said, do whatever he tells you. And so probably with a deep breath they went over and they took out a ladle and they took it to the steward and the steward tasted the ladle and it's wine, and it's the best wine he's ever tasted, and he's really upset with the family cause they didn't use this wine first.

Now, Mary, the first miracle is at Mary's request. Is that a communication to history about how we should approach Jesus? Left to us in the bible. After the cleansing in the temple we hear nothing of Mary except that she's worried about Jesus. No words, she doesn't say another word. Do whatever he tells you, is the last words she says. We know she's worried about Jesus. But then we see it at the end after Peter has left and the apostles have run off, she's on Calvary. She's on Calvary with Jesus. This is biblical. She's there, and what had it to be on Calvary as she watched her son, first of all beaten and torn by brutal, beast Roman soldiers and as she watched her son suffocate. That's how you died on the cross, you suffocated. As he gasped for breath and can't breath, what would it be for any mother to watch her child like that. It had to be horror. And didn't she have the memory of the annunciation, and didn't she have a heart full of questions that were no longer just questions, they were terrible problems. Why? Why? It doesn't make any sense. But over and above all the questions is just the simple human reality, the suffering mother. And so, Jesus dies. And now let's think, that is all biblical. Whether you're Catholic or Protestant or Orthodox, that's Mary.

Now just on the surface, just on the surface if you were just examining scripture without any prejudice and your understanding was that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the second person of the blessed Trinity, and you saw this person with this history in time and space with what the person you call a Savior, wouldn't say that person deserves respect? Wouldn't you say that person has a special place in God's plan? Just on the basis of what she did and what her place was. If you saw her just as a mother, just as a human being. Seeing here there with her son and all she went through from the annunciation to Calvary, just on that basis alone wouldn't you have respect for her? Of course, of course. And if you did believe, if you were Christian and you did believe Jesus was truly God and truly man, truly human, how could you possibly think if you believe Christ is risen that he wouldn't take care of this person that

gave her whole life from his conception to Calvary in order that he could do his mission. In other words, if Mary doesn't exist at this moment, if Mary is not saved who has a chance?

Side A ends, side B begins.

Mind you, we're still within the context of the Bible. We haven't moved to aberrations or anything like that. Now, the reality is that perhaps if we look closer perhaps we'll see that indeed Mary has an enormous place in salvation history, critical place in salvation history, an indispensable place in salvation history. But that most of the people who are devotees of Mary have not fully presented it. Mary's isn't an accident or is it divine providence guiding the structure and the writing of scripture that Jesus first miracle occurs at the intercession of Mary? No, it is not. It's not accident, it's providence. But it is an accident or is it providence that the last words that we ever hear Mary speak to the world, the last words that the universal church says are the words necessary for salvation and no more words from Mary are needed after these words, are the words, do whatever he tells you. And in the context where he is telling the absurd from the human eye view, and doesn't Mary point to all Christianity and for all of humanity and say exactly the same thing, do whatever he tells you. She is not a contentless person, an image in scripture that has no content to her, and therefore you can apply any content to her. She is a very, very explicit person who is left by God to point precisely to those things that we are supposed to do, which from the human eye view seem like they won't work out, but from God's eye view Mary knows they are going to work out. She says do whatever he tells you, and what does he tell us? Love your enemies, pray for those that persecute you, turn the other cheek, return good for evil, be merciful. All the things that earlier on in the last lecture we mentioned that Christians and others see as dangerous fantasies that can't work out, Mary points and says, do whatever he tells you. And it is not just the pointing of do whatever he tells you as a thought, it's the same do whatever he tells you in the context of telling people to fill wine jars with water and have it turn out wine. Mary points to the teaching of Jesus. She, of course, can point to nothing else, but the fact that these are her last words, whatever he tells you has almost been ignored and that these words point to precisely the things that Christianity does not want to hear in Jesus. Precisely the situation Christianity does not want to face, it's own lack of trust when Jesus says something that doesn't seem like it can work out from the little human eye view, and Mary points and says, right across history, and says do whatever he tells you.

There is no image of Mary, there is no aberration of Mary, there is no nothing. Absolutely, positively nothing that can be associated with Mary that doesn't include that last sentence that's left to us in the official revelation, do whatever he tells you. Every time we look at a statue of Mary, a picture of Mary wherever it may be, in any form or shape, that picture, that statue always contains the words and must always contain the words, do whatever he tells you because that is a true Mary. That is the one of the official revelations. And those words mean do, trust. That's what they're saying. That's what she's saying to the stewards. Trust him, he knows. Do whatever he tells you. Stop trusting himself, trust Jesus, and then do what he tells you. And those are the last words God leaves to us in sacred scripture that Mary says. It is no accident, it is not accident.

From conception to Calvary, Mary was with Jesus. And if Christ is risen there is no possibility that Mary, who went through so much and gave up so much and suffered so much that he could

live and carry out his mission is not with him today. Do you all remember the poem, I'm sure almost everyone here would know it in Ireland, in other parts of the world they don't. I can remember it from the earliest moments in my childhood there we had a little blue picture of Mary on one side and little poem on the other side. Just folded like a book, you know two page, one page book, the covers of a book. And we all know it, or most I would assume here in Ireland. As a matter of fact the little blue book that I had that I can remember from the cradle I still have on my desk with this on it at home, the same book from childhood. And we all know the poem, but think of it in terms of what we're saying, that Mary is with Jesus from the first moment of conception till the last breath on Calvary.

Lovely lady dressed in blue, teach me how to pray. God was just your little boy, tell me what to say. Did you lift him up sometimes, gently on you knee? Did you ever sing to him the way mother does to me? Did you hold his hand at night and did you ever try telling stories of the world? And oh did he cry? Do you really think he cares if I tell him things, little things that happen? And do the angels wings make a noise? And can he hear me if I speak low? Does he understand me now? Tell me for you know. Lovely lady dressed in blue, teach me how to pray. For God was just your little boy and you know the way.

And we all know as parents, you can have children and whether they be 5 or 15 or 25 or they can even be 60 or 65, if you're still living, and they're still just your little boy or your little girl. To the world they might be presidents and kings, but they are just you little boy and little girl. And what happens to them at 25 or 35 is just as much anguish to you if it's bad and just as much joy to you if it's good as when they were 5. Jesus, God is just Mary's little boy, and that's why when she asked him to change the water into wine he goes forward and he does it. But in the great mystery of Jesus being God and in the great wisdom of God, Jesus makes sure that the last words that are left to his people by his mother are, do whatever he tells you.

But on the other hand, think of this, he leaves those words with us in the very context where he leaves Mary with us to ask him for the help to do it, the first miracle, Mary's first intercession. How many of us pray to Mary? How many people that have devotion to Mary pray to Mary asking her to give them the grace to do everything that Jesus tells them. To love as Christ loved, to love their enemies, to be reflections of divine mercy, to forgive indefinitely, to care for the least as if they were the most. How much of Mary in prayer is that? And if more of it were, would so may Protestants and so many Catholics be turned against it, especially if they saw the power of asking Mary to intercede so that we can become more in conformity with Christ, more deeply loving as Christ loved. Or to say it another way, so that we could put on the minds and the heart and become part of the mystical body of the Lamb of God.

Here at Nark we all know that the stance that Mary has to the right of the Lamb is the stance of intercession, praying for people. At her first intercession and the last intercession we know of for people was at Canaan, and that's the same place where she said, do whatever he tells you. Remember this afternoon we said to do something in the name of Jesus means you have to be identified, connected with Jesus' mission. Who is more connected with Jesus' mission than Mary from conception to Calvary? And she went through the whole thing. Is it not so that at this very second she has an overwhelming interest and concern and desire that everyone who is a disciple of her son do what her son said? She has an investment in this mission. This mission to

proclaim God as Father. To live in the imitation of Christ, to bring salvation to the world through Jesus' plan of peace. And the investment she has is an investment of struggle and tears and worry and anxiety and anguish beyond belief on Calvary.

And so, we have to look, we have to look again at what we have done with the place of Mary in terms of Christian spirituality. But this aberration here at Nark is placing Mary as an intercessor alongside a symbol of Jesus that is incontestable in what it means. Gentleness, holiness, non-violent, kind, forgiving, merciful, returning good for evil, the suffering servant, the Lamb of God. That's where Mary is interceding alongside of. That we do what he tells us, do what the Lamb tells us. Everyone does what Jesus tell them that's easy. Everyone loves their friends and so forth. Jesus even said it was going to happen. You love those who love you. But the hard thing is to do what he tells you when it doesn't seem like it's going to work out. To do what he tells you in the context of the suffering servant, the Lamb of God. And that's what Mary tells us at Nark and that's what she tells us at Canaan.

Now, the situation is this, you and I, if we are really human, and we all are human, we all have to ask for help. No one is totally self sufficient, impossible. It's easy for us to go up to someone in the store and say will you help me push this cart, it's too heavy for me. Or to go up to someone and say will you change this money for me? I need some change, I can't use paper money, or something. We're always asking for help. It is normal, it is human. As we talked about this afternoon, Jesus says if you will abide in my I will abide in you. Ask what you will and I'll give it. Think of the history of salvation of Mary from conception to Calvary, who could abide more deeply? Who could the heart of Jesus love more deeply than someone who gave all that, and therefore when we ask Mary for help and Mary can help us and Mary can intercede, it is because she abides so deeply in the heart of Jesus, so deeply in the heart of God. If you will abide in me I will abide in you. Ask what you will and I will grant it. And above all, above all, we must never forget the passage, never forget the passage where the woman says, cries out in the crowd, blessed, blessed is the womb that held you and the breast that nursed you, meaning Mary. And Jesus says, rather blessed is the one who hears the word of God and keeps it. Mary is ultimately Mary because she obeyed the will of God at great and terrific costs. All the human factors are there, but her suffering comes from saying yes to the impossible. Yes to God's demands, yes to God's ordeal, but demands and ordeals that are meant to what? Demands and ordeals that have to come about in order to love Jesus. Demands and ordeals of love, no just raw suffering. She is on Calvary not to suffer but to love. She says yes to God at Nazareth at the annunciation not to suffer but to love. She abides most deeply in the heart of God because she was most obedient. She did what God asked, she did what God told her, she did what her last words were to the church, do whatever he tells you. She did it. And therefore she can speak with authority.

What we are confronted with is the fact that Mary, Mary is literally a little Lamb of God. Let us call her the first Lamb of God, the first little Lamb of the Lamb of God. For we all know that on Calvary, on Calvary there were two altars. There was the altar of the cross on which Jesus was crucified and died and all through the place of sacrifice, sacrifice to God and God is love. There is the altar and the cross on which Jesus died, loving God by obeying him and loving humanity by asking God to forgive them. But there was a second altar on Calvary. There was the altar on which Mary, Mary was torn apart and sacrificed as she watched her son be torn apart on the cross. As we said earlier, there is no darker situation in life than to watch the one you love be

destroyed by evil and death. It is the blackest of all realities, and she did everything she was supposed in order to obey God, everything and yet here is how it's winding up. Yet she is still there loving Jesus. She can't talk to him, she can't get him down from the cross, but just like we all know with someone that loves, just like we all know even if we can't help we want to be present because we love them, and she'd there, but the agony of it to be there. And so Mary also is a suffering servant. She suffers in order to serve Jesus. Said another way, Mary represents what is the Christian vocation, for we are all called moment to moment to give birth to Jesus in the world wherever we are. To give a place for him to live wherever we are. We are all called to a Miriam vocation, and we are all called to love in the face of evil, which means a sacrificial love, which means a suffering love. Mary is the model. She is also the one that teaches us to do whatever he says, but she is also the one who is willing to do what is the absolute necessity, to stand with us and intercede with God for the power to do this. And the promise behind do whatever he tells you is, there is infinitely more out there than you can imagine if you trust God, if you trust my Son, if you trust the Lamb. And so, we know that little poem, that little didy, Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow and everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go. And how appropriate it is. Mary's little lamb was the Lamb of God, and from conception to Calvary, from the first instant of existence to the last breath, Mary was there and Mary's there now and she is there to intercede for us, but always there to point to us, do whatever he tells you, do whatever he tells you, do whatever he tells you, and He is the Lamb of God.

It seems to me that the aberration here at Nark is a call to rejuvenate an authentic understanding of Mary and Christian cult and Christian devotion and Christian practice. It seems to me taken as a whole unit, the aberration is a way of saying, let us remove forever the notion that there is something like Christianity that is a Miriam Christianity independent from the teaching of Jesus. It does not exist. But let us also note that what is also being said here is there is a Miriam Christianity that the very nature of the aberration is, that it is communicating that she is there to do what must be done so we can have the power to do what he tells us. She is there to intercede for the very power that she tells us that we need to have the power to follow Jesus, to trustfully obey him.

And that will put an end to the rosary on machine guns and the icons leading people into battle. And that will put an end to all kinds of Miriam devotion and get us back to what it really is all about. Mary pointing to her Son, telling us to do whatever he tells you, telling us to obey him and her son pointing to God telling us fear not, be at peace for God is rich in mercy. Just trust. The aberration here is really about Mary telling us again, telling the world again, trustfully do whatever he tells you and I am with you and I will get you the power to do it.