

## Weekly Readings:

This week, as we continue deepening on our theme: **“all generations will call her blessed” (Luke 1:48)**, we are invited to perceive Mary’s trust in God’s providence and imitate her trust. The background reading for the week is **Revelations 12:1-17** where the woman depicted can represent both Mary and the people of God and the child born is our Messiah, Jesus Christ. Mother Mary trusted God in the midst of the persecution from the devil and invites us to do the same this week in the midst of any difficulty or temptation that we may face.

**Day 1 Revelations 12:1-6** **“...The woman was delivered of a boy, the son who was to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, and the child was taken straight up to God and to his throne, while the woman escaped into the desert, where God had prepared a place for her to be looked after...”**

This part of the reading communicates many theological aspects of our Church and Mother Mary’s life. The woman in this passage can represent Mother Mary. It is interesting to note that Mother Mary was portrayed as a woman of significance in the passage because she is depicted as **“robed with the sun, standing on the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”** All this indicates the greatness and importance of Mother Mary in our life and God’s plan of salvation. Furthermore, Mary is crowned with twelve stars, signifying her role as “Queen of Heaven” and queen of her children. The twelve stars can be seen as symbols of the twelve tribes of Israel, along with the 12 apostles. In essence, the question is, do we give Mother Mary significance in our own lives? We are invited to dialogue with Mary as to how we can give her more importance in our life such as including her in our prayer time and taking time to imitate her way of living.

Mary in this passage was faced with a suffering ordeal of needing to protect the life of Jesus within her at all costs. The devil was adamant to destroy Jesus’ life, but God played a vital role in protecting the life of Christ and Mary’s life. Mary trusted in God the Father and succeeded in bringing Christ into the world. How is God inviting us to bring Christ into the world today? For example, are there situations where we also experience the persecution of the devil in our life? The devil in this reading may represent those times we go through temptations when we evangelise or try to reflect Christ through our being. Can we identify the temptations of the devil in our life? In what moments does the devil try and tempt us away from trusting God and being faithful to God?

**Day 2 Revelations 12:7-17** **“...As soon as the dragon found**

**himself hurled down to the earth, he sprang in pursuit of the woman, the mother of the male child, but she was given a pair of the great eagle’s wings to fly away from the serpent into the desert, to the place where she was to be looked after...”**

In this reading we see that Mary chose to constantly trust God by turning to him and the help he provided in the desert. Thus, this shows us that to trust is a choice. We are invited by God to choose to trust him in the face of the temptations from the devil and all his persecutions. Mary fled to God and not to herself or anybody else. Who do we turn to in our difficulties and persecutions? Do we turn to God or to other people or habits? Today we can turn to God and dialogue with him about the different situations we find ourselves in and ask God how he invites us to trust him in those situations. For example, it is important to acknowledge how the devil has been tempting us throughout the day. The temptations can come as thoughts or ideas to do something that is harmful to ourselves or others. The temptations from the devil may be subtle, so subtle that we think nothing of them. However, a Christian life is called to be an examined life, where we are vigilant of the inner stirrings of our heart, to ensure and discern when the inner stirrings come from God or from Satan. How can we flee to the desert throughout the day just as Mary did? An obvious way is to pray and set some time aside every day to dialogue with God. Another way to flee to the desert may be to choose to trust in God’s will and put his Word into practice in concrete ways throughout the day. For example, to choose to bring Christ into the world by courageously sharing about him with someone when God asks us regardless of the fear we experience. We can be faithful to practice humility in our family or workplace regardless of the general opinion. Let us ask Mother Mary to teach us how to flee to God authentically.

**Day 3 2 Maccabees 7:1-42** **“...But the mother was especially admirable and worthy of honourable remembrance, for she watched the death of seven sons in the course of a single day, and bravely endured it because of her hopes in the Lord. Indeed she encouraged each of them in their ancestral tongue...”**

In this powerful reading, we are invited to perceive the tremendous faith, courage and trust in God that the mother and her seven sons had in the face of the cruel persecution and tortures by the King. One by one, each son died a martyr’s death and publicly proclaimed their love for God, and their reason for not abandoning their faith or God’s Laws. The mother in the reading resembles the courage and trust in God that Mother Mary reflects in Revelations 12. The mother encouraged her sons to be faithful to God to the very end and, therefore, accepted death with hope in the

resurrection. Can we also imagine Mother Mary doing the same for Jesus Christ? In fact, if we allow Mary, she also does the same with us, for we are her beloved children too. Mary will always encourage us to be faithful to God at all costs, even to the point of death. That “death” may mean a death to our ego, reputation, and worldly dreams or a red martyr’s death (which is physical death).

In prayer, we are invited to identify who the “king” may be in our lives and what his requests are. For example, it may be that someone tells us: “Come on! You don’t have to go to Mass every Sunday! Or, someone may tell us: “Why commit yourself weekly to a prayer group?” Or, in the face of a destructive behaviour: “Try it! It won’t hurt anyone,” and so forth. How can we put our trust in God into practice today in the face of the “kings” around us? For example, how can we show to someone today that we choose God above all else?

**Day 4 Luke 4:1-13** **“...filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert, for forty days being put to the test by the devil.”**

Today’s reading parallels our theme of this week found in Revelations 12 in the sense that Mary fled to the desert and trusted in God’s providence. The desert in biblical terms represents a place of encounter with God, a place of transformation and purification and the place where God, in all his ways, leads his children to put his Word into practice.

Jesus (who was taught by Mary) shows us the best way to live in our deserts of temptations or moments of persecution. For example, in the desert Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit. We can imagine that Jesus would have been attentive to each insinuation of the Holy Spirit. We can see through the encounter between Jesus and the devil that Jesus was faithful to voicing out what he understood from the Holy Spirit. How can we also imitate Christ in our own life? For example, how can we better turn to the Holy Spirit within us and listen to his guidance and pronounce his guidance to those around us?

In order for Jesus to have sufficient strength to do live through his desert experience he fasted and lived the ascetic practice of sacrifice and self-denial. This practice of sacrifice can help strengthen us to trust in God’s providence and put his will into practice. Let us ask God today how he invites us to practice self-denial for the sake of building his Kingdom. For example, perhaps it is to deny ourselves today of a luxury, our favourite food, a favourite t.v. show or our own physical comfort. What sacrifice can we offer God today for the sake of being able to better trust and

proclaim him to our world?

**Day 5 Daniel 3:1-97** **"King Nebuchadnezzar sprang to his feet in amazement. He said to his advisers, 'Did we not have these three men thrown out into the fire?' They answered the king, 'Certainly, Your Majesty'. 'But', he went on, 'I can see four men walking free in the heart of the fire and quite unharmed!'"**

In today's reading, we are invited to perceive how many times in our society "Kings" set up "golden statues" for us to worship, and thus, lead us to forfeit our faith in God. These golden statues can come in many shapes and sizes such as money, status, same sex marriage, abortion, euthanasia, pre-marital sex, population control, and so forth. Many times in our society, we can have the "King Nebuchadnezzar's" forcefully pressuring us to compromise with our faith, to bow down and worship these statues.

In our encounter with God today, let us dialogue with him about what these "statues" represent for us. It is important to clearly identify them. Are we worshipping any "golden statues"? Are we being pressured by society, family or friends to worship any particular statue? Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael chose to trust God and forfeit their own physical lives rather than reject God and his ways and this provided an opportunity for King Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge God as the true God. How is God inviting us to concretely imitate these three men today?

**Day 6 Daniel 6:1-29** **"The king then ordered Daniel to be brought and thrown into the lion pit. The king said to Daniel, 'Your God, whom you have served so faithfully, will have to save you.'"**

Daniel won the respect and trust of King Darius, the Babylonian King. King Darius appointed Daniel, the exiled Israelite, to rule over the whole Kingdom. Why did Daniel win the approval of King Darius? Because King Darius appreciated the gifts of God that Daniel showed via his interpretations of dreams and the wisdom of God that he transmitted. It was evident to everyone that **"Daniel, by virtue of the marvellous spirit residing in him, was so evidently superior to the other presidents and satraps that the king considered appointing him to rule the whole kingdom"** (Daniel 6:4). Unfortunately, the other two presidents were filled with jealousy over Daniel's appointment and set out to discredit Daniel. Many times in our own lives we may also experience that our faithfulness to God and our practicing God's Word will cause some people to become jealous of us and want to discredit us. What do we do in those moments? Do we hold fast to God's commandments like Daniel? These two presidents could not find

any way to discredit Daniel and said: **"We shall never find a way of discrediting Daniel unless we try something to do with the law of his God."** Therefore, they manipulated King Darius to set out a decree to have everyone worship him or be sentenced to death. Of course, Daniel did not worship King Darius and was eventually thrown into the lion's pit. Daniel chose to worship God above all else. Would we make the same choice? How about in our day today? How can we choose to trust in God's path of true love within the snares of the devil's plotting and planning? God took care of Daniel and he'll take care of our eternal life too if we are faithful to him.

**Day 7 Matthew 6:25-34** **"Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well..."**

Through today's reading, Jesus challenges our little faith as he did with his disciples. Every day is an invitation to grow in trust in God's providence over our life like the saints have done. Jesus himself shows us that in the midst of fulfilling his mission on earth of evangelising, teaching, healing and leading people into a deeper relationship with God the Father, he had to daily trust that his Father was taking care of him. God our Father asks us today: "Are you worrying about the food you are to eat or the clothes you are to wear? Are you worried merely about your economic situation?" What do our worries consist of? Do we trust God will show us how to solve our problems? Do we turn to God for guidance and advice? Jesus invites us to set our **"hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well"** (Matthew 6:33). How can we set our heart on God just like Mary and Jesus did? By consciously seeking God in our hearts in the time of prayer and listening to God's words that instruct us on how to live the project he has for our lives. Let us ask God to help us set our hearts on him and not on false ambitions so that, like Mother Mary and Jesus, we can actively collaborate with his eternal plan of salvation on earth.

Prepared by the Verbum Dei Missionaries,  
© Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity, Brisbane,  
[Website: verbumdeibrisbane.weebly.com](http://www.verbumdeibrisbane.weebly.com)

# School of the Word

## Weekly Readings

*"All generations will call me blessed"*

*(Luke 1:48)*

### Week 3: Trusting in God's Providence like Mary



*"...the woman escaped into the desert, where God had prepared a place for her to be looked after..."*

*(Revelations 12:6)*