**"How can this be?"**

“How can this be?” are the first words of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Bible. In other words, Mary questioned. She investigated. She used her intelligence. She explored the true meaning of the Angel Gabriel’s words that she was “full of grace.”

What a wonderful example Mary is to us of the 21st century. Recent discoveries in space have revealed a planet similar to Earth called Kepler 22-B (named after the satellite that discovered it) that is 600 light years away. Also, astronomers have identified a giant black hole in a distant galaxy that is capable of sucking whole stars into its center. All of these wonders can cause us to say with Mary, “How can this be?” Whenever we deepen our knowledge of the immensity of space or study the complexity of the human body or reflect upon the world still undiscovered under the sea, we catch a glimpse the awesomeness of our Creator God.

Hopefully, these mysteries of Earth and outer space will spark our curiosity as well as invite us to get involved in new discoveries. God wants us to use all of our intelligence, to question and to work at making our world a better place. If Kepler 22-B, for example, can sustain life, then would this new planet need a Savior? We should never shy away from difficult questions. Remember Jesus’ words: “You will know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”

Finally, it is important that we remember Mary’s second words in Scripture: “Be it done to me according to your word.” The Virgin Mary did not know the path her life would follow, but she trusted that God would take care of her every step of the way. Mary stepped out in faith. She left her little village and set out on God’s great adventure. Her quiet “yes” to be the Mother of God, the Christ Bearer, changed our world for ever.

Our world is still in need of healing and everyone must get involved. If the peoples of the world, for example, could learn how to get along together, maybe we could turn our whole attention to unraveling more of the mysteries of life. We could put an end to cancer, discover a cure for AIDS. We could eliminate hunger by sharing more of the world’s resources with those who need them the most. Perhaps there might even be a time when the population of Earth will board space stations and begin the journey to a distant planet.

This is an exciting time to be alive. There are plenty of fresh challenges ahead of us, demanding all of our gifts. But in this changing world there is one thing we know for certain: Christ’s love will never diminish and his light will always illumine our darkness.

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