

# DIOCESE WIDE Lenten Book Study



## Chapter Three Reflection

The Third Word: *"Woman, here is your son"... "Here is your mother."*

By Elizabeth Kelly

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### The Mission of Mary

My prayers go with you as you move through our Lenten study, that the Lord is unleashing new and refreshing graces in this holy season.

This week, our hearts turn toward Mary at the foot of the Cross.

When I was coming back into the Church in my late twenties, Mary was a bit of a stumbling block to me. I didn't have enough education to make a distinction between worship and veneration, for example, and though I respected the Blessed Mother, I cringed at the way she had been portrayed so often: a pale, passive, perfect Madonna. I thought, there has to be more to Mary than that. Looking back, my ignorance is embarrassing.

And Mary was exceptionally patient with me in bringing me slowly and surely into a greater understanding of her role. I had a real breakthrough moment on a writer's retreat one weekend, we were given this creative exercise: we were to envision a door, behind which our creative gifts would find their place and flourish. The door was a three-day journey away. The assignment was to tell the story of those three days.

As I began the exercise, I could not envision a door but sensed instead a precipice of some kind, high atop a mountain draped in heavy fog. I couldn't see the precipice, but I felt it there, hidden in the dense clouds that were drifting down to overtake me. This precipice was drawing me to it, as if a rope were tied around my waist and pulling me up, but I was frightened to yield to the pull. I also sensed that I was not alone; Jesus and Mary were with me. We huddled together to discuss our course, and I told them I was afraid to begin the journey, that I couldn't see but one step ahead of me because of the fog. Jesus said with complete authority, "Follow me. I know the way exactly." He turned and took off up the mountain. Startled and bit panicked, I looked to Mary as if to say, "Where's he going so fast?" She smiled and said, "Keep your eyes on him, and I'll be right behind you."



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When I start after Jesus, it is as if my feet barely touch the ground. Soon we are moving so quickly, so surely and with such great agility that I am filled with exhilaration. The desire to keep up with Jesus draws me forward. He is nearly flying up the mountain, his eyes fixed ahead of him, seeing through the fog what I am unable to see, and he moves over the rocks without one misstep. I am aware of strength in my legs and of a quiet, unnamable strength that calls no attention to itself supporting me, carrying me up the hill. Mary, trailing behind us is so quiet, that I sometimes think we have lost her. But when I turn around the check, there she is, smiling and urging me to “just keep your eyes on Jesus.”

Mary’s life, her message, and her meaning have never been anything different from that—a beckoning to fix our eyes on the Shepherd, who knows the way exactly. This is Mary at the Annunciation: “Yes, fill me with your purpose.” This is Mary whose spirit rejoices, “Great things he has done for me!” This is Mary who pondered in her own heart, “And a sword shall pierce your own soul too.” This is Mary at Cana: “Do whatever he tells you.” And this is Mary at the foot of the cross: keeping her eyes on Jesus even to the end.

*Our Lady of Sorrows, we pray for the grace to, like you, keep our eyes on Jesus. Amen.*

This article was adapted from Kelly’s award-winning book, *50 Reasons I Love Being Catholic*. Visit her website at [LizK.org](http://LizK.org).

