

MARCH 25 2026 FATHER PETER JAE CHOI

I heard a story from Matthew West, who is a Christian singer and songwriter.

He went to a camp with his daughter, and the camp counsellor took all the dads with their daughters deep in the woods. The counsellors told the dads to put blindfolds on their daughters, and guide them through the woods. Dads were given three instructions, which they had to tell their daughters before they began their walk. The instructions the dads were to give their daughters were: one, I will never leave you, two, you can ask me anything, three, you should listen only to the sound of my voice.

So before he began his walk with his daughter, Matthew repeated the instructions over and over again, and made her repeat it back to him.

In the beginning, Matthew found it easy guiding her, because he was allowed to put his hand on her shoulder, and they were allowed to walk and talk with each other. And then all of a sudden, a silent signal was given by the camp counsellor, to remove his hand from his daughter. And with another silent signal from the camp counsellor, Matthew could no longer speak to his daughter. All he could do then, was to follow his daughter, hoping that she remembered the second instruction that she could ask him anything.

He was hoping she would ask for directions. She began to wander off, and got off-track. At that moment, the camp counsellor intentionally misled his daughter. "You seem lost. Why don't you follow me, and I will get you caught up with the group." As soon as she followed the counsellor's instructions, she ended up in a ditch.

With the blindfold she didn't know where she was, and how to get out. She paused, and thought for a few minutes. He stood there, waiting for

her to talk to him. Finally, she remembered the instructions, and called out to her dad. "Dad, are you there?" When she called out, he couldn't hold back, and began to cry. He could barely respond. "Yeah, I-- I'm here." When she heard back from her dad she realized that her dad never left her. He was always there. It was she who forgot to reach out to him.

This exercise taught him an important lesson on trust. Even when God is invisible to us, and remains silent, he is there. In the time of struggle, when we veer off the track, he is there. God never leaves us.

How often do you and I forget that God will never leave us? How often do we forget that we can ask God anything? And how often do we forget that we should listen only to the sound of his voice?

What do you do when you can't see? What do you do when you're afraid? Do you turn to God, or do you make your own plans?

In the first reading, King Ahaz found himself in a dire situation. He'd just experienced military defeat from the surrounding kingdoms of Aram and Israel. It was God's punishment for his unfaithfulness and for turning to idolatry. Ahaz had destroyed all sacred vessels, and shut down the temple of the Lord.

God spoke to Ahaz to ask him for a sign. But Ahaz responded, "I will not ask the Lord, I will not tempt the Lord." It sounded pious and full of confidence in God, but unfortunately, that wasn't the case. He wasn't going to submit to God's plan. He was going to turn to the Assyrian king for protection.

Ahaz sent a messenger to the Assyrian king: "I am your servant, and your son. Come up, and rescue me from the hand of the king of Aram, and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me." In the end, he didn't repent, and disobeyed God.

Unlike Ahaz, Mary obeyed God. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she was already engaged, or betrothed, to Joseph. She had her dreams and plans. But she put them aside, and said yes to God's plan. It was through her "yes" that God became incarnate, and made God's plan of our salvation possible for us.

From the story I told earlier, about Matthew and his daughter at the camp, his daughter couldn't see. She didn't need to know where she was headed, but it was enough that she had the assurance of her father. He was with her, and there for her. In the same way, our Blessed Mother didn't know what her future held in store for her, and didn't have all the answers. But it was enough for her that God was with her.

Some years ago, I heard a story of a man who used to steal comic books from the book store when he was young. Because he spent all his money on comic books, and spent too much time reading them, his grade began to suffer. So his parents told him he couldn't buy any more comic books, and stopped giving him allowance money. So, he began to steal.

When his dad finally found this out, he became visibly upset with his son, and spanked him. It was back in the '80s, where parents could get away with spanking.

Then one day, his mother noticed he'd stopped stealing comic books. So she asked him: "What made you stop stealing comic books? Is it because you're scared of your dad spanking you?" He replied: "No, Mom. That's not why I stopped stealing. It's because I saw him cry. I realized I made him cry. That's when I stopped."

It's not the fear of punishment, but the realisation that we are loved that changes us. God wants us to say yes to him. But he doesn't want to force us to obey him against our will. He wants us to freely choose to love and obey him.

Our Blessed Mother did that. She surrendered. She gave her whole heart and her whole life to God.