

Magnificat



The Collect

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading *Micah 5:2-5a*

You, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time

when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Gospel *Luke 1:39-45*

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

What Elizabeth saw.

When I caught a glimpse from the window of someone running out on the road with such haste, and with such radiant joy, I knew it was you, Mary. Who else would burst in on our ordinary days now set on their head by my own incredulous news, but you, my sweet child? Always so vibrant, so ready for life to have its way with your hopes and your dreams, but were you ready for this?

Your footsteps seemed so much more hurried than usual, and your face, yes, it had wonder upon it, yet also fear, as I recall. You were afraid that night weren't you. Even as my flesh leapt inside of me, we both knew that we had been changed by an awful yet tender power, and so fear became our other, estranged bedfellow.

As I held you in my arms, you catching your breath, I looked at you, even as you gazed in wonder at me, placing your hand upon my blossoming womb, and you seemed all in an instant older than a girl, as if an age had passed between your yesterday and our today.

'Blessed are you', I said.

'Blessed',

for that is what it felt like my dearest Mary. This was not meant to be, for me, and certainly not for you, not in this way. Yet here we were, two women of Judea, of Galilee, nobodies from nowhere, bearing a fullness that for now, only our bodies could tell.

What was it that happened next? Did we go inside or did we linger in the cool of evening, catching the last light of a day we would forever remember? You sang - I do remember that - such a song of praise, one that the angels might have whispered into your ear. From heaven. From your heart.

'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord'.

It was then, from that first look to that moment of your proclamation, that you became a woman to me not a girl, and more than a woman; a mother. The mother.

'My spirit rejoices in God my Savior'.

You were to me as the old prophets of ancient times. Like Rebecca. Like Esther. Like Ruth. Like Leah. Like Miriam, who sang her song to the Lord, as the freed men of the Hebrews stopped and stared at the miracle of the new life that they had just begun, safe on the other side of the waters of death.

That's what you were for me, Mary, the confidence I needed that I too had found favor with the Lord, that this was life that I carried within me, a miracle of my own new birth, emerging from my long struggle with all that I had failed to be. No longer barren. No longer lost, cast out and broken by unmet expectation. Now I was met in you, in that instance of my unalloyed joy. Your life had awoken my own, and I knew then that nothing for us would ever be the same.

Did you sing that song once or more than a few times?

'My soul proclaims...'

It sounded like a thousand Mary's, voicing into the darkness of our people's long night, suffering at the hands of the mighty, the enthroned, the proud. Yet, your voice, *yours*, my own, sweet Mary, was as a tempest, a mighty warrior's cry, echoing our forebears of Jericho and Jerusalem and Canaan. In you, within you, I saw the lowly lifted up, but how? I saw the hungry fed, but by what new food when all that we knew was want. I saw in you a new heaven and a new earth, a new world in this girl, this child, this holy presence. Blessed are you, Mary, for you believed.

Did we sit that night? All I can remember is dancing, and a feast of food I hardly knew we had. I remember the rejoicing of the other women of the house, and the look on the faces of our men, who had labored hard that day in the hills of their fathers, sun-soaked skin and brittle hearts, yet as they walked in to find you making home among us, something more was present.

'Mary', one said.

'Holy', said another.

'Blessed are you', said the third.

What child is this that you bring to us? What light have we yet to see that shines so in you? What is this gift that you bear?

Magnificat. For you have opened my heart, to the One who is coming.