

## Reflection for December 13, 2020 - My Soul Magnifies the Lord Based on Luke 1:47-55

This very well known and inspirational poetic piece from Luke that Shirley Mae read we know as the Magnificat. Literally translated from Latin it means **“My Soul Magnifies the Lord.”** These verses have been made into numerous Hymns and compositions, and are included in any number of dramatic presentations. Many of you no doubt have your favourite rendition of these ancient words put to music.

The verses only appear in Luke when Mary is visiting her cousin Elizabeth, who is also expecting a child (John the Baptist).

Mary will be publicly shamed and humiliated when word gets out that she is pregnant before getting married. Despite this she is filled with joy and exuberantly shares this with Elizabeth. **“I’m bursting with good news, I’m dancing the song of my Savior God.”** And in this biblical translation perhaps the most incredible statement, **“I’m the most fortunate woman on earth!”**

The Gospels are silent on much of Mary’s life until Jesus’ birth but one has to wonder what the time must have been like for Mary. Was her pregnancy filled with the joy she espouses to her cousin? What trials did she face? How was she treated?

Mary’s words not only celebrate her calling, and her love for God but they are prophetic as well. Rev. Donald Schmidt points this out in his book **“Birth of Jesus For Progressive Christians”** that a few of us are reviewing at the moment in an Advent study. **“We realize that Mary was a prophet,”** Donald says, **“for prophets (despite modern notions) do not predict the future but rather read the present. They are the editorial writers of their time, carefully observing the world around them and making comment about the direction things are going, or might go, or should go.”**<sup>1</sup>

God’s **“mercy flows in wave after wave.”**  
**“He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts.”**

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<sup>1</sup> Birth of Jesus For Progressive Christians, Donald Schmidt, p. 33

***“He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud.”***

***“The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold.”***

These are indeed words which are visionary. They speak of God there, with Mary, in life, in situation, in relationship, in the moment. Mary knows the Holy Presence.

Mary is literally bursting at the seams with Joy, Joy knowing that God is with her and has a unique call for her. Moreover, she celebrates with confidence the gifts that God has for humanity, not just for her. This is not a selfish individual who is exclaiming, “look at me, I’m special because God has chosen me, and only me.” Mary is filled with all four Advent possibilities, Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Most centrally she is filled with joy; joy that God’s Holy Presence is alive in her. And she is letting Elizabeth know that. In writing this account, Luke is letting us know that this kind of Joy is offered to anyone and everyone.

Mary is indeed saying, **My Soul Magnifies the Lord**. What does that statement say to you?.

“IT USED TO be that I knew the price of everything and the value of nothing. I was young then. Now, older, I’m thankful that’s changed. These days, I know that the price of friendship is honesty and vulnerability, and friendship’s value is priceless. I know that the price of belonging is humility and grace, and belonging’s value is irreplaceable. I know that the price of love is equality and respect, and love’s value is life-altering. Most of all, I know that the price of faith is the courage to walk through anything with belief in immaculate love – and the value of faith is eternal.”<sup>2</sup>

That reflection is by Richard Wagamese. Richard’s soul Magnifies the Lord.

The day we had to put Liam down my 12-year-old granddaughter wrote me this text.

“Hi papa, it’s Trin. I’m so sorry to hear about Liam today, he was such a good dog and I will never forget when we were in the lake and he was chasing after my stick. I know when I’m dealing with grief I want to be

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<sup>2</sup> Embers, Richard Wagamese, p. 152

alone and not talk to anybody but it might be different for you. I love you so much and if there's anything I can do please FaceTime me or give me a call. I'm always here, well if I don't have school, but other than that FaceTime me whenever you want. I love you so much. Take Care – Trin.

My Granddaughter's soul Magnifies the Lord.

These days a lot of folks would say that Dr. Bonnie Henry's soul magnifies the Lord, although I doubt she has ever thought of her comments in that way. Sensitive, caring, authentic – **“Be Kind, Be Calm, Be Safe.”** Simple but profound words that have meant so much to so many in a time of chaos, worry and uncertainty.

This Advent and Christmas season it will perhaps be a bit more difficult for some of us at least to be as Joyful as we would want to be. We are having to isolate ourselves because of travel restrictions. No plane or car trips to see the family, none of the regular visits from friends, no Christmas parties. That is indeed a bit of a Christmas downer. I myself want to give out a sigh of harrumph. How might I emulate Mary's joyful Magnificat?

I'm reminded of the last verse of one of my favourite Hymns, “It Only Takes a Spark. It is a Hymn that celebrates God alive and present in our everyday lives. You will recognize it.

3 I wish for you, my friend, this happiness that I've found -  
on God you can depend, it matters not where you're bound;  
I'll shout it from the mountain top; I want my world to know:  
the Lord of love has come to me, I want to pass it on.

The Lord of Love has come to me. That is what Mary is exclaiming in her wonderful poetic exchange with her cousin. What a wonderful thing to be so intimately connected with the Holy, that it is bursting forth so joyfully. Mary no doubt understands what it will mean to bear the child that will be God's messenger of the new kingdom, but her witness is a reflection on what God is doing, not what the Messiah might do. **“His mercy flows wave after wave, he is knocking down tyrants and pulling victims out of the mud. The starving poor are having a banquet, the callous rich left out in the cold. I'm dancing the song of my Saviour God.”**

Mary is saying, “the lord of love has come to me and I want to pass it on.”

Mary was pregnant with the Holy Spirit and so, my friends are we. It lies within us, with the promise that our souls too can magnify the lord. And we can shout that from the mountain top and let the world know.

How might we do that this Joyful Sunday? How might we do that tomorrow, next week, through the rest of this Christmas season and beyond?

That is a question for our individual contemplation this day. Rest assured however that like Mary, as ordinary as we might be, we are all called and chosen as well.

You, we, are God’s beacons of light that bring joyful news into grief, loneliness and uncertainty. You, we, breathe hope and love into the world as God works miracles through us. You, we, give birth to new possibility, to a potential new kin-dom when we live as Mary did, encouraged by the good news that God’s Holy Presence brings to us. You, we, like Mary are prophetic witness to what God can do and when we pass that on, our Souls Magnify the Lord.

Thanks for listening this morning.

Amen