

7. The Woman of Praise – the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

The Faces of Mary in Sacred Scripture

The *Magnificat* Cantic is the longest discourse that Sacred Scripture attributes to Mary. Meditating upon it attentively, in the light of the Holy Spirit, is like delving into Our Mother and Help's interiority. It is a poetic text that challenges us, not only through what it says but also by how it says it. It is the prayer of a woman, but it is also God's Word; i.e., it has the power to accomplish what it says. Because of this, Maria Romero prayed it – not only once a day, but at the stroke of every hour.

We can discover in the *Magnificat* a true and veritable “discourse about God” because it is a hymn which sings of God's Triumph, obtained by the poor, the simple, and those forgotten by the powerful of the Earth. Thus, to be able to sing the *Magnificat* with Mary, we have to harmonize with God's heart and with the heart of the Lord's poor, who are presented to us in Biblical Spirituality: the humble, the ill, the oppressed, widows, orphans, and the marginalized, but, above all, those who in their difficulties trust in God and do not yield to the temptations of rancor, of violence, or of desperation.

Mary's prayer is Biblical, woven from Old Testament quotes and reminiscences; it goes to the essential and is concrete for it has justice and liberation at heart. It is Christological because it is centered on the proclamation of Baby Jesus' Birth – He who is incarnate in her – and also because it anticipates Jesus' prayer who, exulting in the Holy Spirit, will bless the Father for His predilection for the little ones. (Luke 10:21-22) It is a universal prayer because it is able to be proclaimed by all men of goodwill, in favor of all the poor and humble of the Earth over whom the loving mantle of God's mercy is extended.

The *Magnificat* begins with an explosion of joy from the soul which recognizes God's marvelous action. Mary freely expresses her feelings of happiness in faith, of awe in contemplation, and of peace in self-giving. In the second part of the hymn, God's attitude toward the poorest, the weak, and the last is presented. Even Jesus follows this logic: He presents Himself as the Messiah who doesn't break into the world with grandiosity, but one who is born of a humble and simple woman. This is the scandal of the Cross, which was testified to with power and understanding by the first Christian community.

Praying with the Word (Lk. 1:46-55)

1. I become aware of God's presence. I imagine that I am in the scene next to Mary, who is singing to the Lord for all that God has accomplished in her life and in the life of her people. I ask for the grace to learn to read history and the present moment in God's light.
2. I invoke the help of the Holy Spirit by slowly repeating this (or another) prayer:
“Holy Spirit, help me enter into the sentiments which are the origins of the *Magnificat*. Put me in harmony with Creation and with the Creator of all things so I may recognize and understand Your action and the great Mercy of the Father in the commonplace storyline of my daily life. Amen.”
3. I read the *Magnificat* (Lk. 1:46-55) slowly and reflect a while on these three points:
 - **A symphony of praise and awe** (vss. 46-48) Breaking forth in jubilation, Mary allows her heart and the Spirit within her the freedom to sing the marvels of God in her life. What is my prayer? Do I allow my heart and the Spirit liberty to express themselves, even with feelings?

- **A profound profession of faith** (vss. 49-50) The Omnipotent *has done and does* great things. What impedes me from recognizing and believing in God's fidelity and love? I renew my act of faith in His powerful salvific action which manifests itself even in my weakness and fragility.
- **A particular option for the poor** (vss. 51-53) Mary recognizes herself as "poor" in the Lord and this renders her profoundly in solidarity with the poor, the suffering, and the abandoned of the land. I repeat these words slowly so they might make my heart attentive and in solidarity like hers.
- 4. I finish this prayer with a heart-to-heart conversation with Mary: I express to her my sentiments, my joy, my gratitude, my doubts, and all my struggles which the *Magnificat* Canticle raises up in me.
- 5. Magnificat...

Our Father

After having concluded this prayer, I sit still and reflect a little: What has the Holy Spirit said to me through this prayer? Has He encouraged me? Has He invited me to conversion? How do I think I may correspond to the gift received in this prayer?