

## Advent and the Magnificat

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent (C) - Lk 1:39-45

Ave Maria Catholic Church, December 19, 2021 - Fr. David M Vidal

There is a beautiful quote from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux that says it all: “*De Maria numquam satis.*” That means: “*Of Mary, one can never say enough.*” We can never exhaust the treasury of Mary. We can never “be finished” thinking about Mary. We can never speak sufficiently about Mary.

How important it is to think about Her! How important it is to speak about Her! Why? Because in his providential plan, God chose Mary as the recipient of all the promises of salvation. She is the Virgin, who shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel, according to the words of the prophet Isaiah, (Isaiah 7:14).

We did not choose Mary; God chose Mary. God chose her to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate, and then, Jesus chose her to be our Mother as well. And as our Mother, she teaches us with her words and example.

From the very first moment of the Annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel, we learn so much from Mary. The Archangel praises her saying “*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you!*” Through this encounter, we discover Mary’s humility. Her humility is manifested by the confusion she experienced at hearing Gabriel’s praises. Her humility is then confirmed by her words at the moment she was proclaimed to be the Mother of God. Mary humbly said: “*I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word,*” (Lk 1: 38).

Because of Her great love of God and of man, Mary accepted God’s call to be the Mother of the Redeemer. And at that moment, she also accepted all the trials of her life, especially the immolation of her Son on Calvary and the separation from Him from the time of his Ascension to the moment of her Assumption.

Now, the Gospel of the Visitation reveals new treasures from the life of Mary.

As soon as it was proclaimed to Mary that she was chosen to be the Mother of God, She set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, to put herself at the service of her cousin Elizabeth. Again, Mary’s humility stands out as a foundational virtue on which all her other gifts find solid foundation.

At this moment, we are drawn to witness the encounter of Mary and Elizabeth. We recognize this as one of the most profound Marian revelations in Sacred Scriptures.

It is most profound because it reveals Mary's divine maternity as Elizabeth addresses Mary as “*the mother of my Lord.*” It is most profound because it reveals Mary’s role as Mediatrix

of divine graces. Then, when Mary's greeting reached Elizabeth's ears, the infant John the Baptist stirred in Elizabeth's womb. Why? Because at that moment, the unborn Christ, through his mother's voice, sanctified the unborn John. For this reason, tradition tells us that John the Baptist was born in the state of grace, without original sin, because he was sanctified by Jesus when he was in Elizabeth's womb.

Now, the narrative of the Visitation does not finish in Elizabeth's words but finds the conclusion and summit in Mary's words: the hymn that we know as the Magnificat.

In the tradition of the great women of the Old Testament (Hannah, Deborah, Judith, and Esther), Mary sings the canticle which has become part of the church's liturgy.

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name, (See Lk 1: 46-55)*

This song of Mary is Our Lady's answer to the mystery of the Annunciation: the angel had invited her to rejoice, and Mary now expresses the exultation of her spirit in God her Savior.

In the presence of the most powerful and merciful God, Mary expresses her joy and at the same time her own sense of lowliness: "*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant,*" (Lk 1:47-48).

Nevertheless, the awareness of her lowliness does not prevent Mary from recognizing the greatness of God's work in her. For this reason, she says: "*Therefore, all generations will call me blessed,*" (Lk 1:48). In fact, Elizabeth was the first to proclaim Mary "*blessed,*" (Lk 1:45).

The Magnificat not only reveals the experience that Mary had of God's gazing upon her. It is not only the work that God has done in Mary, but also the work that God has done for all of us.

God is faithful and He fulfills the promise of redemption which He made in the Garden when God said to the serpent: "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel,*" (Gen. 3:15).

God fulfills his promise, and Mary sings God's faithfulness and mercy: "*He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation . . . He has come to the help of his servant Israel*

*for he remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever,” (Lk 1:54-55).*

At the very heart of Advent, the Blessed Virgin Mary prepares us to receive the Messiah with the Canticle of the Magnificat which She sang during her encounter with Elizabeth.

First, the Magnificat presents the salvific work of God, that comes to us through the history of the Chosen People and reaches its summit in the heart of the Virgin chosen to be the Mother of God. God comes to us, and the Magnificat helps us to have the right reading of history.

Second, the Magnificat reveals man's interior disposition during Advent. Advent means to open wide the eyes our souls to see the action of God in our lives. We also need to say with Mary: *“The Almighty has done great things for me.”* If you have not said it yet, it is time to start pronouncing these words: God has done marvelous deeds for me, and I am grateful!

Finally, the Magnificat invites us to participate in the spiritual joy proper to Advent. My soul rejoices because the Messiah is not only a promise, but He is a reality. God truly is with us. God is among us. He wants to live in us so that we can live in Him.

Mary's canticle is also Mary's prayer. Then, Mary, our Mother, teaches us to pray. How important prayer is in our spiritual life! Only prayer can open the eyes of our soul to the “great things” that God does for us. Only prayer can strengthen our hearts, so that we can be grateful in words and actions. Only prayer can prepare our souls to receive God's gifts. Only prayer can make room for Jesus in our hearts.

During this last week of Advent, let us be closer to Mary. She is the best Mother and the best teacher! With her words and examples, She will prepare us for the coming of our Lord Jesus. If we want our Advent journey to bring us to Jesus, let us go to Him through Mary. Amen.