

✘ Luke 1:39-56 ✘

IN NOMINE IESU

Blessed indeed is this maiden of lowly estate. For the Most High has visited her, and has conceived in her womb the Son of God. What a magnificent honor and privilege: to carry the Lord in your womb, to bring forth the promised Seed. Thus does Elizabeth cry out, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”

But the Blessed Virgin Mary does not exalt in herself. She does not become conceited and proud saying, “Yes, I am blessed and so I deserve what I have received.” Rather she says, “yes, I am blessed, my soul magnifies the Lord.” The Virgin Mother is the picture-perfect display of humility. Would that we imitate her.

Consider Mary. She has just learned that God has chosen her to be mother to the Son of God yet she does not sit back and consider the why as if to say, yes, I deserve this. I go to temple and offer the right sacrifices and pray the right prayers. I am a good and devout Jew, so it is fitting that I receive this blessing. Instead she readily gives all glory to God, saying that only because of His mercy has she received such a blessing. Neither does she ponder how she might profit from this. Quite to the contrary, the young maiden goes with haste to her older relative, who has also miraculously conceived, to be with her during her last months of pregnancy and to help with baby John.

What virtuous humility the mother of our Lord shows in changing John’s diapers and holding him in her arms and bathing him. She does not consider herself so glorified that she cannot do the work that she should do or can do. So often we bemoan the menial tasks of life, thinking that we are better than this and deserve more than that. We look down on those who throw papers for a living or clean houses or collect our garbage or sweep the high school’s floors, all the while chastising the rich and famous for being too conceited and too full of themselves. We are never satisfied with what we have been given and so we must make it look like we suffer when really we don’t. Or we must make it look like we’re humble and of lowly estate when really we drive two cars, own our home, go out to eat too often, and over indulge on Christmas gifts.

Mary, on the other hand, though she is more blessed than any woman and has reason to boast in herself and her vocation as the Mother of God, humbles herself and thinks of others. She humbly goes to Elizabeth and greets her and cares for her in her time of pregnancy and birth.

Elizabeth, too, shows wonderful Christian humility. “Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” Who am I that I deserve such a blessing and privilege to receive such a visitation? And instead of bragging about how God has blessed her with her own miracle child, Elizabeth calls Mary blessed and rejoices in seeing her and hearing her. She does not begrudge Mary, the younger, with having the Christ-child, but rejoices along with her baby, John, that the Christ-child has visited them even while in the womb of His mother.

The presence of our Lord always demands reaction. It is either hate and hostility as we see in the Pharisees and even now see in those who despise our Lord so that they do not take His Word seriously but sleep in on Sundays and think so highly of their Christianity and faith that

they do not think even His Holy Supper profits them anything. So much the less coming to worship and praise Him for all His mighty acts of salvation and mercy. They, in fact, think that they are doing God a favor when they come to church or read the Bible or pray. They think they deserve the Sacraments and are offended when they are told that they do not deserve them, but that they are graciously given them by our Lord, despite their wicked heart. They would do well to mark Mary's words: His mercy is for those who fear Him.

He scatters the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. Consider His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion. They thought themselves strong and mighty and well prepared, able to follow their Teacher even to the grave. Yet they were scattered as sheep without a shepherd. This was for their own good. First so that they would not suffer and die with our Lord; second, to teach them to trust and depend only upon God and never upon their own resolve or convictions.

Would we truly be Christian we would make Mary's psalm of praise our own. For in her Magnificat, Mary shows herself to be a better doctor of theology than any of the prophets, apostles, professors, or pastors that ever were, are, or will be.

My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. It is she who carries her Lord in her belly, yet she knows that it is He who carries her in His mercy. She takes what the Lord gives her and does not deny it. She owns up to being called blessed by all generations. It is a disgrace when we try to be humble by denying what God has given us.

If He has given us riches then we should not say that we are not rich, or else He will humble us Himself, and that will be worse than if we humbly appreciated what He gives. If He gives us desirable careers and beautiful homes, we should admit as much and not try to appear humble by saying that our careers are not good and our homes but poor shacks. So also, if He has given us a low income and broken cars, we should not try to make ourselves more than we are. That is the root of all pride: denying what God has given to us.

Therefore Mary acknowledges what God has said, that she is highly favored and will be called blessed by all generations and also that she is a poor handmaiden, not in any position to boast; a lesson for us all.

One side note: we would do well to call the Virgin Mother blessed. For if God has called her highly favored and said that she will be called blessed, but we're afraid of becoming Mary worshipers, and so we don't call her blessed and favored, we will soon find that we are not in the generations of the Lord. For all generations shall call her blessed.

But back to Mary, the doctor of theology. She so beautifully sums up all of salvation history that it can hardly be said better. God humbles the proud and exalts the humble. The first will be last and the last first. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Go, sell all that you have and come follow me.

It is not prideful to boast in the Lord or acknowledge what He has given to you. True pride is thinking that you deserve what He has given you, either temporal or eternal blessings. So also, it is not humility to deny what God has given you or to make it seem as if you graciously receive His gifts, but true humility is precisely in boasting in the Lord, praising Him for what He gives from His mercy as well as what He does not give.

We would do well to remember that He has looked upon us, who are of lowly estate and full of sin and disgrace, and has blessed us with the birth of our Lord. He has scattered the proud by coming as a baby and brought down the mighty by being born in a manger. He has filled the hungry with good things, his body and blood, and has sent the rich and proud empty away. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and you, his offspring, forever.

My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠