

Magnificat

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Before her song of praise to God, the *Magnificat*, (Luke 1:46-55) Mary is named twice blessed by Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45) - Blessed among women and blessed in her believing that the promise of the Lord God would find fulfilment.

Mary is more than a mere receptacle or empty vessel. She is a full participant in the process. God has invited and she has agreed. It is a meeting of two freedoms: God, free in God's choice, and Mary free in her response to the divine. From the depths of her being she leans on the freely given grace of God (she is named by the angel as "full of grace") and finds in that dependency a radical freedom.

This is the beginning of the "new thing" God is doing. A God who it seems doesn't learn, a God who seems to repeat mistakes, a God who turns yet again to a human being with trust and this time places not a garden but a son to be cared for, nourished and taught what it means to be human. Not superhuman, or piously other worldly human but simply human. God chooses the human and Mary's life is the context of this choice.

It is Mary who responds to God - a concrete human being with all her hopes and fears. Her yes sets her on a road whose outcome she cannot see. God's invitation is an invitation to trust blindly, madly and wholeheartedly. She turns to Elizabeth - Elizabeth the barren; Elizabeth the unfertile; Elizabeth unblessed by God; Elizabeth, focus of the neighbours' whispers. And Mary, soon to be that same focus of suspicion, turns to the woman who will understand. But Elizabeth sees clearly from her position at the edges and recognises in her cousin the action of God who sends his Son to these same edges where he will minister and then die on the rubbish heap outside the walls.

These two women, each in their own way, draw from the wells of faith in the Faithful One which the Faithful One has prepared for them. A new thing is done: God is mindful of the lowly, the proud are brought down, rulers de-throned and the humble raised up; the hungry are filled and the rich shown to be empty because the Faithful One has remembered Israel even as the promise said.

The words of the *Magnificat* place Mary amongst the strong women of the Covenant. She echoes the voices of her sisters in days long gone. She is prophet of the Most High.

And the same Faithful God calls us from our own marginal places. In Christ we are named as full of grace - gracious daughters and gracious sons. The Lord is with us. Blessed are we in our faithful believing that the words spoken to us by God will be fulfilled. We need to drink deeply at the wells of tenderness and compassion that lie within and to learn from the women of the Scriptures that God is faithful.

May we invite you to take up your bible again and join Mary in her song of praise and trust (Luke 1:46-55).