

SERMON NOTES

First Sunday after the Assumption

MARY'S RESPONSE TO GOD

Synaxis Gospel
Luke 1:39-56

INTRODUCTION

Luke has traced the annunciation stories of the birth of both John the Baptist and of Jesus. Before he relates their respective births, Luke records this beautiful meeting of the two mothers, three months before John's mother, Elizabeth, was due to be delivered, and about nine months before Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ.

SYNAXIS READING

Luke 1:39-56

Now at this time Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

"And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said, "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

"For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; for behold from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

"For the Mighty One has done great things for me;

and holy is His Name.

*“AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION
AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO
FEAR HIM.*

*“He has done mighty deeds with His arm;
He has scattered those who were proud in the
thoughts of their heart.*

*“He has brought down rulers from their thrones,
and has exalted those who were humble.*

*“HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD
THINGS, and sent away the rich empty-handed.*

*“He has given help to Israel His servant, in
remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our
fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.”*

*And Mary stayed with her about three months, and
then returned to her home.”*

NOTES

Now at this time Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

It seems that immediately after Mary heard the good news that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Christ, she hurried to visit her relative, Elizabeth.

According to the word of the angel Gabriel, Elizabeth, miraculously in her barren old age, was six months into her pregnancy with the baby who would later be known as John the Baptist.

Elizabeth’s husband, Zacharias, was an Aaronic priest of the tribe of Levi.¹ Elizabeth, herself, was “from the daughters of Aaron.”² Mary had blood ties to this “daughter of Aaron.” Therefore, Mary, (whose father was from the kingly line of Judah) and therefore Jesus as well, was a descendant of both important lines.

The hill country of Judah was south of Jerusalem, approximately a four day journey from Nazareth in Galilee. A major priestly city in that area was Hebron, in former times, the home of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs of Israel.

And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

¹ Luke 1:5. Aaron, Moses’ brother, was the first High Priest and his descendants were God’s designated priests from the tribe of Levi. The High Priestly line was further narrowed to be the descendants of Zadok, but the other Aaronic priests, such as Zacharias, continued as regular priests. Other non-Aaronic members of the tribe of Levi had other responsibilities in the religion.

² Luke 1:5

In Luke 1:15 the angel Gabriel stated that John would “be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb.”³

The Holy Spirit, the source of all prophetic speaking, filled Elizabeth and gave her a prophetic insight, so that she was able to declare the following statement.

And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, “Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

To bear God Incarnate and care for Him as He grew up was the ultimate blessing for any woman.

“The fruit of your womb” refers to the embryo that resulted from that tiny part of Mary, her egg, transformed by being joined to the eternal God.

“And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

When Elizabeth referred to the Embryo in Mary’s womb as “my Lord,” she was calling Him her king. She and Zacharias had already been alerted to the fact that the Messiah, the Christ (the King) was soon to come; for her own son was to be His herald. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth knew that Mary carried her promised King.

“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.”

Usually, this statement is taken to be by Elizabeth about Mary. Mary did believe that God would do as the angel had said, and that her miraculous child would be the Christ.

And Mary said, “My soul exalts the LORD, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

This now begins what is called “The Magnificat,” so named because the first word in Greek is μεγαλύνει which the Latin translated as *magnificat* or in English, *magnifies*. In the translation above, μεγαλύνει has been translated as “exalts.”

The subject of Mary’s⁴ song is the LORD, God her Savior. It is important to see that Mary calls God her Savior. She is also one of those of whom St. Paul, paraphrasing Isaiah, wrote: “For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,”⁵ but “the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”⁶ To teach that Mary was exempt from that charge is a false teaching;⁷ for Mary herself proclaims her need of the Savior, in Whom her spirit rejoices.

³ Sometimes the expression “from the mother’s womb” merely indicates a time beyond the memory of the person. But here, apparently, it was meant literally. Even from the womb, John announced the Christ.

⁴ Noted Roman Catholic scholars do not attribute the original composition of the Magnificat to Mary, partly because they consider “much of the Magnificat does not suit Mary specifically.” See Joseph A Fitzmyer *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981) p.359. This assessment must rest on their preconceived ideas of what is *suitable* to their view of Mary. Godet points out that “every Hebrew child was accustomed to singing large portions of the Scriptures at religious observances.” Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on Luke* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981) p. 62.

⁵ Romans 3:22-23

⁶ Isaiah 53:6

⁷ This late dogma of the Roman Catholic Church (1854) was never accepted by the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. It was considered by them as “an innovation that was alien to the teachings of the fathers of the church.” Krikor Maksoudian, *Frequently Asked Questions about the*

In Mary's soul (her whole physical being), she lifts high the LORD.⁸

While in the Hebrew view the soul encompasses the entire person including the body (the term soul can also describe animals), the spirit is something imparted by God to humans from Himself. It is thought that this special component is the vehicle by which man's soul can commune with God. Mary's spirit has recognized that God is her Savior and rejoiced in that fact.

“For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave; for behold from this time on all generations will count [consider] me blessed.

Mary's relationship with God is as a humble bond-slave. She had no lofty ideas about herself, rather she, rightly knowing herself to be in need of her Savior, knelt in her poor and contrite spirit before Him. God had recognized this humble state of Mary's soul.⁹

The forgiveness and salvation she found in His Presence not only caused her to offer up her life to His service, it made her spirit rejoice. Indeed, God had even bestowed on her the tremendous blessing that all generations will recognize, just as Elizabeth had just done.

“For the Mighty One has done great things for me;

The reason the generations will consider her blessed is “the great things” he has done for Mary.

God has been named by Mary as LORD and God my Savior, she now adds the Mighty One. This is a title of God in three texts of Isaiah. In Isaiah 1:24, the Mighty One is identified as the Lord, The LORD of Hosts. He judges the wicked of His people and restores the true judges to bring about faithfulness in His city. In Isaiah 49:26 and in Isaiah 60:16, the Mighty One is the LORD, your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. In the context the Mighty One throws down royalty and the proud, who must serve God's people.

“Great things” is plural. The last of the great things at her point in time was, no doubt, her pregnancy with the Christ-child. But Mary is also a part of God's salvation plan for all mankind that extended back in time to the faithful of her people, chosen to serve Him.

and holy is His Name.

His Name is a substitute for the unpronounced Hebrew Tetragrammaton (YHWH). The consonants are written without its own vowels, so that it may not be spoken, but instead pronounced: Adonai.¹⁰

The adjective *holy* means the modified noun is completely separate from all others. The LORD is holy because He is unique; there is none other that can even compare to Him. All that belongs to

Armenian Church, (New York, N.Y.: St. Vartan Press, 2004), pp. 88-89. The statement of Catholicos St. Nerses the Graceful, quoted by Maksoudian (page 89), may be seen as a statement of the human nature of our Lord that He took from Mary (not Mary herself) that became impeccable (sinless) when it was joined to the divine nature of God.

⁸ Although the Greek uses forms of κύριος for both Lord and LORD (the replacement for the NAME of God that is not pronounced), it is obvious that Mary here means the LORD. The NASB quoted, reads Lord.

⁹ In Isaiah 66:2 the LORD states, “but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.” This described Mary and she trusted in that promise.

¹⁰ It is a mistake to translate the Name as Jehovah. That translation was the result of earlier ignorance of the fact that the Israelites wrote the vowels for Adonai with the Tetragrammaton consonants, so that the reader would know to say Adonai (Lord) when reading aloud. Therefore, to indicate the Name from the simple term Lord, English Bibles now translate the Name with all capitals: LORD.

Him is also called holy, whether it might be an object or a person. His Name represents a concept of His identity, His being, and therefore is holy.

Mary would have been very familiar with the idea “Holy is His Name” from numerous psalms.¹¹ Here she makes it her own confession of faith that there is no other god, only He is God.

Isaiah 57: 15 may have been in Mary’s mind:

For thus says the high and lofty One who lives forever [that inhabits eternity], whose Name is Holy, “I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit, in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

“AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.

This is a quotation from Psalm 103:17. The Greek of this quotation is not identical to either the LXX or to what one might expect from a Greek translation of the Hebrew. It should be translated, “And the lovingkindness (ἔλεος) of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him. [NASB of Psalm 103:17]” However, when it is God’s lovingkindness that is spoken of, ἔλεος incorporates the idea of mercy.

Mary has apparently conflated two verses from the psalm. The next verse reads, “And His righteousness to children’s children [NASB].” Her Greek translator (Luke?) has given his own interpretation of her words, “to children’s children” as “from generation to generation.”

Those who fear God are those who have reverential awe of Him. This awe stems first of all from the knowledge of His absolute power as Creator and Master of all that exists; but the more one discovers that He is also perfect goodness, kindness, mercy and love, the more the awe increases. Because of this awe, they worship Him and seek to obey Him.

“He has done mighty deeds with His arm;

Here Mary is again drawing from her knowledge of the Psalms and the history of her people written in the Scriptures. The “arm of the LORD” is a metaphor for His power and His Presence exercising that power.

The “mighty deeds” most remembered and celebrated by the Jewish people to this day are those that wrought their liberation from Egyptian slavery, when God performed mighty miracles to convince the Pharaoh to release them. After crossing the parted *Red Sea* into freedom, they sang of “the greatness of Thine Arm” that accomplished their exodus and would bring them into the land of promise.¹² This event was celebrated in many of the psalms like Psalm 136. Verses 11 and 12 of that psalm remember that God led them out of Egypt “with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.”

“He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.

Pride and haughtiness have always been an abomination to the LORD. In 2 Samuel 22:28, David says in his psalm, “Your eyes are on the haughty whom You abase.” The Pharaoh of Egypt thought that he was a god. Therefore, when Moses told him that the LORD commanded him to let the Israelites go, he responded, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides I will not let Israel go.”¹³ Later, it was said that Pharaoh

¹¹ For example, see Psalms 22, 71, 89, 99, 103, 105, 106, 111, and 145.

¹² Exodus 15:1-18. Note verse 16.

¹³ Exodus 5:2

“exalted” Himself against God’s people.¹⁴ Perhaps this proud and haughty man, whose army and choice officers were drowned in the sea as they pursued Israel,¹⁵ came to Mary’s mind. Or perhaps it was the builders of the Tower of Babel who were scattered for their pride.

To be scattered is a judgment upon those who do not honor God. After Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and gave them their covenant with God at Mt. Sinai, he warned them:

So watch yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which He made with you, . . . and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed, and the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the LORD shall drive you.¹⁶

Mary knew her history and that, indeed, often those who, in the pride of their hearts, rebelled against the LORD and became His enemies were cast out, and *scattered* from their land. It was a particular punishment for the proud rebellious of her people.¹⁷

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones,

In this group, she possibly thought of Pharaoh, but there were many kings who had opposed God both from other nations and within Israel itself that God had deposed. There is a long list of Israelite kings who lost their thrones because of their evil leadership of the people, until finally all the people were scattered and taken into captivity.

and has exalted those who were humble.

Scripture had recorded many humble persons that God had exalted. Outstanding in Israel’s history was Mary’s ancestor, the shepherd boy, David, who God placed on the throne of Israel. Mary might now count herself among those humble before God who God exalted.

“HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS, and sent away the rich empty-handed.

Although this quotation is from Psalm 146:7, Mary’s combination of the thought with the fate of the “rich” seems to summarize Psalm 73. In that prayer, the psalmist had been discouraged by his observation of the prosperity of the proud and those who boasted themselves against God. While those seemed to be ever increasing in wealth and ease of life, those who with a pure heart served the LORD were in distress.

After sitting quietly before the LORD in meditation, the psalmist came to realize that the rich wicked had only material things in this life, and would lose their very soul—they would have nothing. Those who hunger after God, on the other hand, would be blessed with His Presence.

“He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.”

¹⁴ Exodus 11:17

¹⁵ Exodus 15:4. They had imagined that they would destroy Israel, and seize and divide all their valuables (the spoils). But the Egyptians were left scattered dead on the sea-shore (Exodus 14:30).

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 4:23-27. See Numbers 10:35; Deuteronomy 28:64; Deuteronomy 30:3; Isaiah 24:1; etc.

¹⁷ Within forty years after they rejected their Messiah and crucified Christ, the Jews were again scattered among the nations for almost 2000 years.

Jacob was renamed Israel by the LORD, but the name Jacob continued to be used; sometimes, the two names were used together. They were used as a patronymic for the entire nation. But when the name of the nation was modified by “my servant,” only the faithful remnant of the nation was meant.¹⁸ It is the faithful people of Israel that receive help from the LORD, and it is to the offspring who have the faith of Abraham that the promises of God are given.

“As He spoke to our fathers” should be seen as parenthetical.¹⁹ The mercy is to Abraham and his offspring forever. The LORD had made promises to Abraham, to his son Isaac, and also to his grandson Jacob (also known as Israel). The promises would be fulfilled and would apply to all of Abraham’s descendants forever. God would define those descendants as all who shared Abraham’s faith.

Mary has understood her miraculous pregnancy as a remembrance (fulfillment) of those promises. The first of those promises had been to Abraham who was told that all nations would be blessed in him.²⁰ The Savior of the world was that promised blessing.

And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.”

It is not known if Mary stayed for the birth of John. Some speculate that it would have been natural for her to stay; but others believe that in her condition, she would have wanted to avoid being seen by the many well-wishers of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

APPLICATION

This is the second Sunday in August that we honor the mother of our Lord. Since her Son is the all important figure in God’s plan, there is very little in the Bible about Mary. But from what is written we can learn much. Our reading for today contains Mary’s own view of her humble position, and the great honor bestowed upon her by God.

This reading contains the Magnificat, which is Mary’s major speech. It is one of two significant passages recorded about Mary; the other is the Annunciation in the first chapter of Luke.²¹ The Annunciation is the record of the Angel Gabriel’s appearance to Mary to inform her that God had chosen her to bear the Christ. The Magnificat is Mary’s response to her relative Elizabeth when Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, recognized that Mary was pregnant with the promised, foretold, King.

From our reading today, but also from the Annunciation, we can learn from Mary, and discover her secret for success in living a blessed spiritual life—the life God wants us each to live. From studying her words, we can see that there were four essential ingredients in Mary’s life: She knew God, she knew the Holy Scriptures, she was obedient to God, and she relied on His Holy Spirit to accomplish all that God wanted her to do.

We know that Mary knew God personally from the Magnificat. In that beautiful speech, Mary begins by saying, “My soul exalts the LORD.” In her soul, she continually greatly

¹⁸ Isaiah 44:1-23

¹⁹ Godet, p. 66.

²⁰ Genesis 12:3

²¹ *Luke* 1:26-38. Possibly a third passage is the actual birth of Christ, which was the reading for The Feast of the Assumption,” *Luke* 2:1-7.

praises the LORD; her entire being lifting Him high. But then, significantly, she adds, “My spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior.”

When she uses the term, “God, my Savior,” Mary is saying a lot in three words. It is *God* Who is her Savior. The Creator of the universe has saved her. But it is God Who is *her* Savior. The two of them, God and Mary, have a relationship that results in her salvation.

In the Old Testament, a saving relationship was established by God with those who believed what He says – with those who trusted Him to do what he promises to do.²² At the time Mary referred to God as “my Savior,” the Church had not yet been established, or the New Testament written, because Christ had not yet been born. Therefore, we can consider Mary, at the time of her declaration, an example of an Old Testament believer. She believed what God had promised He would do.

One of the things that God had promised was that He Himself would pay the full penalty for our sins. Therefore, all who believed and trusted Him, all who trusted that someday God would do exactly that, could call Him their Savior. When God promises to do something, it is as good as done. Mary was saved when she trusted in His word. She could rightly call Him *her* Savior.

God was her *Savior*. We Armenians do not believe with the Roman Catholics that Mary was sinless from birth. When Adam chose to sin against God,²³ all of Adam’s descendants – therefore everyone who has ever lived, with the *one* exception of Jesus Christ—became sinners.²⁴

God, who dearly loves us, wants us to live, and live joyfully in His Presence; but He had told Adam that the penalty for sin would be death.²⁵ Adam chose to sin and so the penalty had to be paid. But *we* cannot pay it and still live. Knowing this, God decided to pay the penalty *Himself!* This is why the immortal God became incarnate as Jesus Christ, so that He could, as a mortal Man, carry out His great purpose of dying in our place.²⁶

Mary believed God and His promises of salvation. She knew God in this saving relationship. Mary’s soul lifted Him high and her spirit *rejoiced* in God her Savior. It is truly something to rejoice in!

Because Mary quoted Scripture in the Magnificat, her extensive knowledge of the Old Testament is apparent. In that great speech, she draws from parts of Genesis, First Samuel, the Psalms, the prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk, and the book of Job.²⁷ This knowledge of the Scriptures prepared her for the part God had chosen for her to play in His plan of salvation. She knew many of the details. She knew that the Savior would come from her very own family – King David’s family. This and many other details

²² *Genesis* 15:6 cf. *Romans* 4, esp. verses 1-8 and 20-25.

²³ *Genesis* 3.

²⁴ *Romans* 3:23; 5:12-14.

²⁵ *Genesis* 2:17; *Romans* 6:23.

²⁶ *Philippians* 2:5-11; *Hebrews* 2:9.

²⁷ *Genesis* 17:7, 19; *1 Samuel* 2:1-10 [Notice how the Magnificat is patterned after Hannah’s statement.]; *Psalms* 34:2ff; 35:9; 138:6; 103:17; 98:1; 118:15; 107:9; 132:11; *Habakkuk* 3:18; *Job* 5:11.

concerning the Christ and God's plan are recorded in the Scriptures. Because of Mary's knowledge of the Bible, she was prepared to serve in the place God had chosen for her.

Because of her personal relationship with God, and her knowledge of His Word, Mary was able to be obedient to Him. She referred to herself as "the Lord's handmaiden,"²⁸ or little slave girl. She was God's to command, completely devoted to His service. The great Apostle Paul referred to himself in a similar way as "the Lord's bond-servant,"²⁹ the Lord's slave.

Therefore when the angel Gabriel informed her of God's plan for her, she was willing. She was willing to do whatever God asked of her, no matter the cost to her personally. But there was more to Mary's decision than one might think at first.

As was the custom in those days, when she was about 14 years of age, Mary had become engaged. But before the final marriage day arrived, the Angel Gabriel appeared to the startled maiden with the wonderful announcement that she was chosen to be the mother of the promised Savior.³⁰

Mary seems to have known that the promised king would be the son of a virgin. In fact, the prophet Isaiah had written that it would be so.³¹ Thus, instead of mentioning Joseph, her husband to be, she asked a very practical question – how would it be possible for her to conceive a son and still remain a virgin?

There were other practical considerations. The pregnancy would put her in a very difficult social position. Her reputation as a pure girl would be shredded by gossip. For his own reputation's sake, Joseph would have to break off the engagement. She would become a public scandal. God was asking her to be the mother of the Savior, but the personal cost to her would be immense.

In spite of all that she knew lay ahead, Mary was willing. In fact, she was ecstatic with joy at the prospect of serving her God. She counted it as the greatest privilege and blessing. She knew too, that eventually, people in all times would call her blessed. And they have.

As it turned out, Joseph did not believe her. Joseph planned to break off the engagement,³² and it was only by the direct command of God that he did not.³³ The gossips had a field day. From what is hinted in the New Testament, people were still talking about the scandal of Jesus' birth even after He was a grown man.³⁴ Sometimes God asks us to put everything on the line for His sake, even our very lives. Are we willing? Mary was.

²⁸ *Luke* 1:38.

²⁹ *Titus* 1:1.

³⁰ *Luke* 1:26-38.

³¹ *Isaiah* 7:14; cf. *Matthew* 1:23.

³² *Matthew* 1:19.

³³ *Matthew* 1:18-25.

³⁴ *John* 8:41. The reference to "fornication" in the John passage may be a subtle attempt to insult Jesus.

However, there was a problem. It was humanly impossible for a woman to become pregnant and remain a virgin. Mary knew that. In answer to her question, the Angel Gabriel told her that all would be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁵

Mary is a perfect example of anyone who desires to do God's work. They are powerless in themselves to do it – just as powerless as Mary was to conceive a baby all by herself or as powerless as water is to turn itself into wine.³⁶ But God's power can do anything.³⁷ And He will provide the power for the work He wants accomplished. The Apostle Paul recognized this when he said, "I can do all things through Christ, Who strengthens me."³⁸

What is really amazing is that when people trust God to be their Savior, this same Holy Spirit, which enabled Mary to conceive Jesus, comes to live inside the believer.³⁹ This is why the Apostle Paul refers to the believer's body as a temple⁴⁰ – because the same God, the Holy Spirit, Who empowered Mary, lives within the believing Christian.⁴¹

There is an interesting story in the New Testament.⁴² One day, as Jesus was teaching, his mother, Mary, came with Jesus' brothers and was unable to approach Him because of the large crowd. The family told Jesus' disciples that they wanted to speak with Him. Upon hearing that she was present, Jesus took the opportunity to make a special point about His close relationship to all persons who, like Mary, are willing to obey God. He turned to the crowd that He was teaching and made this astounding statement: "My mother and My brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."⁴³ A person, who hears the word of God and does it, is considered by Our Lord to be as close to Him as His mother and brothers. It is a breathtaking thought, but our Lord offers us the same close relationship that He has with Mary.

Just as He had for Mary, God has a special place of service and blessing for each one of us as He moves ahead in His program to save mankind. The Angel Gabriel called Mary "highly favored." If we follow her example, we will be as richly blessed. But like her, we need to know God as our Savior; we need to study His Word, the Bible; we need to be obedient and willing to do whatever He asks of us, no matter the cost. And finally, we need to rely not on our own strength, but on the Holy Spirit to empower us to accomplish even the *impossible* if it is His will. God offers us this great honor; the decision is ours. May we, like Mary, respond with hearts full of exaltation of the LORD, and joy in God our Savior.

³⁵ *Luke* 1:35.

³⁶ *John* 2:1-11.

³⁷ *Ephesians* 1:19; 3:20; 6:10; *Philippians* 2:13, 2 *Timothy* 2:1.

³⁸ *Philippians* 4:13.

³⁹ 2 *Corinthians* 6:16-18; *Ephesians* 1:13-14.

⁴⁰ 1 *Corinthians* 3:16.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 1 *Corinthians* 6:19.

⁴² *Matthew* 12:46-50.

⁴³ *Matthew* 12:50; *Luke* 8:21.