

COLLEGE CHAPEL TALK

THE MAGNIFICAT

by the Rev. Ormond Odhner

Readings: Luke 1:39-56

Mary's beautiful psalm of thanksgiving to the Lord for His approaching birth (often sung in the form of a chant at Christmastime) is generally called "The Magnificat," from the first word of its Latin translation. (The Latin word-order reads, "Magnifies my soul the Lord . . ."] Mary herself did not know that her song had an internal, spiritual sense. Consciously, she herself was simply inspired to speak in awe and gratitude of the part she played in the birth of her Savior, and to describe the work of redemption that He would perform as though it were already accomplished. Nevertheless, she was Divinely led in her choice of words and phrases so that her song, from beginning to end, has that spiritual sense.

In the internal sense of the Word, Mary represents the church, which, essentially, is that pure and virginal affection of truth in which the seeds of Divine Truth can be implanted, take form, and grow. And for His birth on earth, and for His work of redemption and glorification, the true church will ever magnify the Lord from the heart and with intelligence will rejoice that God became the Savior. For the true church knows that of and from itself its spiritual state is low, and so it regards itself as deserving nothing, save to be the servant of the Lord.

The true church takes no pride in itself, for it knows that it is blessed only because of the mighty works done for it by the Lord; and it therefore attributes all holiness to Him alone. The true church acknowledges that it was from His eternal mercy towards those who could be saved that the Lord brought the infinite power of Divine omnipotence to bear upon the hells that tried to prevent human salvation, scattering the pride of the devils and putting them down from their lofty seats of control over the world of spirits and over people. By such Divine judgment the humble were at last exalted and raised to heaven. And through the new church then established, the spiritually hungry were filled with the knowledges of good and truth, while those who had thought themselves rich—those who formerly had the Word, but would not search it and put to work its treasures—they were left an empty shell. And thus were fulfilled all the promises that the Lord in His mercy had made to the church from the time of the fall on down to the day of His birth.

Such, in summary, is the spiritual meaning of the Magnificat. May it be fulfilled in us individually, so that with full understanding and with sincerity of heart we each may say, as Mary said two thousand years ago, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."