



by Fr. Jacques Nieuviarts, AA

“The *Magnificat* is the song of hope, it is the song of the People of God walking through history,” Pope Francis said during his homily on August 15, 2013. He added, “it is particularly strong in places where the Body of Christ is suffering the Passion.” Everything is said of the *Magnificat* in these few words. It is at this depth that we must meditate on it and sing it. The wonders of God in the Scriptures are always, in multiple forms, passages from death to life. The *Magnificat* is a song of resurrection. It celebrates God’s life as stronger than death. The Bible abounds with stories that speak of situations of hopelessness where death appears ready to win out. There is Hagar, Abraham’s servant, wandering in the desert with Ishmael, her son. They are about to die, she and her son, in the middle of the wilderness and drought. She cries out to the Lord; she shouts out her distress. And then the Bible says, in this astonishing way, “God heard the boy’s cry” (Gen 21:17). This isn’t some kind of mistake. It’s the profound truth that cuts across the entire Bible and that characterizes so many psalms: God hears the cry of those who are small; he listens to them (e.g. Ps. 22, Ps. 34). The entire *Magnificat* sings of this: “He fills the hungry with good things, he sends the rich away empty-handed...he raises up the lowly.”

A voice coming from the springs of God

Mary sings the *Magnificat* with a clear voice, with a voice that springs from God himself. And her song, in itself, seems to make the whole Bible resonate, the Bible that never ceases to affirm God’s fidelity and his special predilection for the meek and the small...and right from the very

beginning.

One should also speak of Hannah, the mother of little Samuel. She would go to the temple in Shiloh every year. There she would pour out her tears for having never born a child. Eli, the priest, got upset with her, thinking that she was drunk. But she was drunk with sadness. Then Eli understood and affirmed that God had heard her and that the following year at the same time she would be holding a child in her arms. That would be the little Samuel and Hannah promised to give him to the Lord. He would become the prophet who would prepare the way of the Lord at the heart of his people and would one day administer the royal anointing to Saul and then David. Hannah, too, would sing a hymn of praise that greatly resembles that of Mary (1 Sam 2:1-10), so much so that it is like its 'ancestor.' It is the Magnificat nine centuries before Christ's birth.

God loves the humble. In the Bible they are called the "*anawim*," "the poor of YHWH." But this word describes more accurately those who are bent over, those under the heavy burden of suffering, of poverty, and of misery, of the oppression weighed down on them, and who know that in this misery the only one who will answer their cry is the Lord. That is why little by little they became the figure par excellence of the small and the humble. The Book of Exodus has strong words to express that God hears them and loves them. From the burning bush God says to Moses, "Yes, I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry against their taskmasters, so I know well what they are suffering" (Ex 3:7). But we also find these words: "If he cries out to me, I will listen; for I am compassionate" (Ex 21:26).

Welcoming the Magnificat at the center of our lives

Magnificat

My soul doth magnify the Lord:
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my
Saviour. Because He hath regarded the
lowliness of His handmaid. For, behold,
from henceforth all generations shall call me
blessed. For He that is mighty, hath done
great things to me, and holy is His Name.
And His mercy is from generation unto
generations, to them that fear Him.
He hath showed might with His arm.
He hath scattered the proud in the conceit
of their heart. He hath put down the mighty
from their seat, and hath exalted the lowly.
He hath filled the hungry with good things:
and the rich He hath sent
away empty. He hath
received Israel His servant,
being mindful of His mercy.
As He spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham
and to His seed
forever.

