

In the Name of the Living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the reflection of today's readings, consider this beautiful image:

It is the custom in one African tribe that when a woman decides to have a child, she goes and sits alone under a tree, and she listens. She listens until she hears the song of the child who wants to come. Once she hears the song, she returns to the man who will be the child's father and teaches the song to him. When they make love to conceive the child, they sing the song to call the child to them.

When the woman is pregnant, she teaches the child's song to the midwives and old women of the village so that when the birth time arrives, the people surrounding the mother sing the song to welcome the child among them. Then, as the child grows up, the other villagers learn the song. If the child falls or hurts his knee someone picks him up and sings the song. When the child does something wonderful, the people of the village sing this song. When the child goes through the rites of puberty and becomes an adult, the villagers sing the song.

It goes this way through life. At a wedding, the songs of husband and wife are sung together. Finally, when this child grows old, and lies in bed ready to die, all the villagers know the song, and they sing it for the last time.

Ponder in your hearts how just how beautiful that is.

The gospel reading for today tells us of a pregnant woman who sings a song....a song about her child, who he is, and who he will become.

Mary's song is her response to her cousin Elizabeth's spirited greeting, but it is more than that. It comes from deep inside her. It knits together in a new way the sacred experience and language and hope of her people like pieces of a quilt transformed from scraps to splendor.

Nowhere in this song do we hear the name of her child, but somehow he is there in every phrase. This song is not hers alone; it is the song of the child who wants to come, who comes to do the will of God. This song echoes in the events of her son's life, his death, and his exaltation. The song celebrates the God who keeps promises....not only to Abraham, but also to us.

The Church has picked up this song and sung it often, particularly in daily evening worship. Mary's song, The Magnificat, is a central text in the liturgy of the historic Church. Who knows what number of settings musicians have composed for it through the years?

Who knows how many voices have joined with Mary's in singing her song through the centuries?

This is the song about Jesus sung by the human being who knew him best, influenced him most,

and remained faithful to him always. With his mother singing these words from her heart, does it surprise us that Jesus grows up to preach the Beatitudes? The Magnificat announces that God scatters the prideful, dethrones the powerful, and drives away the rich. The God of the Magnificat takes sides, lifting up the lowly, providing a feast for the destitute. The Beatitudes call happy are those in need, those who hunger, those who weep...as only for the humble is there hope. The doorway to the kingdom has a low lintel; all must bow to enter...and Jesus calls happy those who do not find that hard.

Like mother, like son!

The Magnificat echoes through the lifetime of Jesus and through the lives we live as well. It points to a redemption achieved once for all, but that continues to unfold wherever the Good News takes root. The overthrow of oppression that Mary's song proclaims turns out to be a continuing revolution. The battleground is every community of people and every human heart.

As for us, each of us sings a song from deep inside, a song about the future. If a parent, that song may be about our child, because for a parent, the future appears embodied in a child in a way. But, whether or not parents, each of us sings a song about the future. A song about hope, coming from the heart, reveals who we are and shapes the time ahead. What we sing with our lives becomes our legacy to those who follow after us.

Just what will our song be?

Maybe a commercial jingle that incites us to spend ourselves on what can never satisfy? Maybe a pop tune that avoids deep sorrow and true joy? The problem is not with classics or pop tunes or commercial jingles. The problem is when we ignore how The Magnificat is not just Mary's song and it is not only about Jesus...as it also proclaims God's hope and purpose for us.

Mary's song is our song. We can live in a way that magnifies and rejoices in the Lord. We can do this by the grace of her Son, our Brother. The song that turned out true in his life can turn out true in ours as well.

Pray always to God that you each may sing The Magnificat with your lives. Pray always to God that it become our legacy to our children and all who come after us. Pray non-stop for God to open your heart so that, when your final hour arrives, you may we hear this song of divine triumph sounding in your hearts and that we may hear it ringing all around us and know it as our own.

For the God who kept faith with Abraham, and Mary, and Jesus, and every past generation keeps faith with us as well...in the name of this God about whom Mary sings: ever with us as the Father, and as the Son, and as the Holy Spirit. Amen.