

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

CYCLE C

Revelation 11: 19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab

1 Corinthians 15:20-27

Luke 1: 39-56

OPENING PRAYER *(A statue of Mary, some fresh flowers, and an unlit candle stand on a cloth-covered table in the gathering place. As the session begins, the leader lights the candle and calls members to be conscious of God's presence. With the leader providing a copy of the lyrics, members join in singing a familiar Marian hymn. Following the song, the community prays in two alternating groups.)*

- I: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
- II: For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.
- I: The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
- II: His mercy is from age to age
to those who fear him.
- I: He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
- II: He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones
but lifted up the lowly.
- I: The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.
- II: He has helped Israel his servant,

remembering his mercy,

I: according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

All: Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as it was in
the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Luke 1: 46-55

COMMENTARY

The feast of the Assumption gives us another opportunity to honor the mother of Jesus and our mother. The reading from Revelation gives us one picture of this valiant woman, “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” Christians see this as an image of the victorious Mary, having already fought the good fight. She lived a life-long *Yes* to God, beginning with the annunciation. She bore the son of God, nurtured him, stood by him on the cross. She also stood by the disciples at Pentecost and supported the early church. Yes, Mary deserves the honor of the Assumption. We rejoice for Mary and with Mary.

In our own age, when many women suffer and thus struggle for their independence, Mary continues to be a powerful icon. In Latin America, women in situations of poverty and violence are animated by the insight that Mary was like them, a poor woman of the people. They identify with Mary because they share the same hope and the same language that cries out in the Magnificat. She lived a life of hard daily labor. She honors their struggle and their pain. A woman who survived the violent public execution of her son, Mary is a companion on women’s shared calvary. One of the Latin American hymns proclaim that, “...[I]t is to this woman that God has done great things. Honoring her puts me in solidarity with God’s own option for the poor, and with the poorest of the poor colonized women in violent situations most of all.”

In her book, **She Who Is**, Elizabeth Johnson, one of the foremost theologians of our time, cites German theologian, Dorothee Soelle, in offering other examples of contemporary women’s identification with Mary in many countries. Mary, notes Soelle, is a woman for all ages.

[L]et us not be too hasty to abandon Mary to our patriarchal opponents. The millions of women before us who have loved Mary were not simply blind or duped. They, too, sensed her subversive power and offered resistance from which we can learn. Uniting the militancy of the Magnificat with the charity of a lover of God, 'she becomes an image of hope for those who have been cheated of their lives'.¹

For Elizabeth Johnson the story of Mary carries powerful liberating energy when placed side by side with the struggle of women for liberation.

Laying their own religious desires side by side with the official symbol of Mary, women struggle intensely for a liberating rather than restricting interpretation. They read her stories in the Bible from their own location outside the corridors of ecclesiastical power, discovering meanings that would never be apparent to a patriarchal mind. Rather than letting her stand alone, they link her to the other women around Jesus. They catch glimpses of her as companion, sister, and friend with her own human experiences that connect her to women across the centuries.²

The vulnerable Mary dared to say *Yes* to God. In joy and sorrow, in much tribulation and suffering, she endured in her fidelity to God. So she is for us now indeed, "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." Hail Mary!

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

What is your image of Mary? How has it changed over the years?

What phrase of the Magnificat grabs your attention?

Name a valiant woman in your life who expresses for you something of the perseverance and the fidelity of Mary.

RESPONSE INACTION

- ◆ Reach out in support of battered women. Contact your local battered women's shelter.

¹ **Truly Our Sister**, by Elizabeth Johnson. ©2003, Continuum Publishing, N.Y., N.Y., p.15.

² *Ibid*, p.16.

Set aside twenty minutes some day this week to pray reflectively some decades of the Rosary.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(Several members take turns praying as follows.)

Magnificat

- I: I sing your praises, God with all my heart.
And I rejoice in you, O God of Life,
for you have looked upon my lowliness.
And who am I to merit your attention?
- II: I henceforth regard myself as happy,
because you have done great things for me.
And every generation gives assent,
for you are God and your name is holy.
- III: You give your grace anew in every age
to those who live in reverence all their lives.
Grace is your strength but you unmask all pride.
You strip us bare of our self conceit.
- IV: Dethroned are those who hold authority,
The poor and humble you uphold.
You give in great abundance to the hungry
And send the rich away with empty hands.
- V: Your people Israel have been remembered,
for mercy has been sent to all the faithful,
just as you promised to those before us,
to Abraham, to Sarah, their children forever.

As found in **Fire of Peace**, compiled and edited by Mary Lou Kowanacki, translated by Mary David Callahan, OSB. ©1992, Pax Christi USA, Erie, PA, p.146-147.

(Members join hands and pray the Hail Mary. The session concludes with exchange of the sign of peace.)

