

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

December 19, 2021



PEACE

and the presence of God

by Drew Downs

For Jesus, the word is *Shalom*. We remember that in *Shalom*, we are speaking not only of the absence of conflict, but the presence of peace.

The question that bedevils us then is how is peace *present*?

Often we may feel a sense of relief from our anxiousness that we call *peace*, for instance. And what we sense is *both* an absence of

anxiety *and* a presence of calm, satisfaction, or even joy.

It seems that we are invited into a pattern of actively cultivating peace. Something that is present; not just the silencing of conflict.

As followers of the Prince of Peace, we haven't always put our efforts into a mode of positive creation, however. So perhaps we work to make *that* happen.

ADVENT

Winter 2021

WHAT'S GOING ON

"You know we've got to find a way

To bring some loving here today".

-Marvin Gaye

It is hard not to get nostalgic this time of year. For some, this is a comfort they love about the holidays. For others, it is a source of pain. For me, I don't have a ton of memory of *this* particular time of year; approaching the fourth week of Advent. As a kid, we were still in school. My parents wouldn't yet decorate, though Mom might break out some greens a week before the big day.

Our honoring Advent didn't create a lot of memories. But just like Bishop Jennifer, after Easter, Advent is my favorite season.

I don't think Advent is *supposed* to be about memories or nostalgic longings. It's for preparation and anticipation. Which means it is ultimately about *discernment*.

As we make our preparations for the Feast of the Incarnation (and the Christ Mass), let us bring with our memories and desires some new thoughts about our moment and where we fit into it. Thoughts which cultivate peace: in our own lives and in the community.

And let us find in these days, the light that never goes out, which is always present. Here among us.

Join us for these upcoming Christmas activities:

Greening of the Church, Wednesday (12/22) @4:30-7:30 pm

Christmas Eve, Friday (12/24) @4 pm and 8 pm

Christmas Day, Saturday (12/25) @10 am

St. Stephen's Day, Sunday (12/26) @8 am and 10 am

Drew

ADVENT

Winter 2021

FOR SUNDAY

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 19, 2021

Collect

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 1:39-45(46-55)

"And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.""

Reflection

How many times have we tried to put ourselves into Mary's shoes this time of year? Perhaps we don't do this every year. But we've certainly done it more than once.

There is no denying the challenge she has been invited into. And no question that a lesser person may have found it all too much.

This, of course, is where our minds often go. To the the certainty of Mary's good character, the relative weakness of others, and then probably the weakness of our own.

ORDINARY TIME 2021

Then again, this is why God picked her, right? Because she was bound to say yes? Because she *is* so special (and therefore others are not).

I suspect this is all vaguely true. And also a bit nonsensical; a counterfactual. Because it *didn't* play out the other way. There were no fallback choices. Nor is Mary's "yes" in opposition to our hypothetical "no". It is only ever *really* her "yes."

And Mary's response in song, which we know as the Magnificat, is humbly beautiful and provocatively hopeful.

It begins with a kind of theological ambition we should long for:

My soul magnifies the Lord

How often we jump to the second half of the line, but this is the opening. Her soul *magnifies God*.

Presently. Not in the birth of Jesus. Not in the sequential happenings of the incarnation process. And certainly not in her being Mary. *This is its own thing!*

It is *her* soul that magnifies God. And magnifies in a way all can see.

There is much else that to love about the Magnificat, but let us begin where she begins: with a soul that magnifies the Lord.

Created with the divine spark of God, *our* souls can magnify the Lord. Just as our spirits can rejoice in God *our* savior. For we know that God has looked upon the lowliness of us, the servants.

Being special isn't relative to each other, but in relation to God's love.

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