

THE FEAST OF ST. MARY the VIRGIN

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"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior"

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"My soul *magnifies* the Lord, and my spirit *rejoices* in God my Savior"

- ❖ This is Mary saying very simply, "Let my praise *show* you how *good God is*."
- ❖ More than anything, she wants to do this by bringing us to Jesus, and today's psalm gives us a pattern for how she does it.

It begins with a pledge of deep, unceasing praise: "I will *bless* the LORD at *all* times; his praise shall *ever* be in my *mouth*."

- ❖ It continues "*I* will glory in the *LORD*; let the humble *hear* and *rejoice*. Proclaim with me the *greatness* of the LORD; let us *exalt* his Name *together*."
- ❖ So we see that this joy and thanksgiving isn't just a *private* conversation with God, it's a proclamation and an invitation.

The whole *purpose* of their testimony is that others will be encouraged *and join in*, and draw near to God *themselves*.

- ❖ "Don't be *ashamed*, don't be *scared*, he *saved* me when I *called* to him."
- ❖ "*Taste* and *see* that the LORD is good."
- ❖ "Fear the LORD...those who fear *him* lack *nothing*."

This is *exactly* what Mary as our Blessed Mother is all *about* – showing us *who* God really *is* and *encouraging* us along the *way* to him.

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Why do we need this? Because God often loves us more than we want to be loved.

- ❖ You see, we *all* have expectations for ourselves, and *hopes, dreams, and desires* for our lives, and that's fine.
- ❖ I think creating these little worlds is a totally natural expression of being made in the image of God, the Creator of all worlds.

But what we have to *remember* is that *Jesus* knows what we were created to *be*, so *he* has only the *highest* expectations for us.

- ❖ And since he *knows* what God actually *promises*, he has even *greater* hopes, dreams, and desires for our lives than *we* do *and*, not only *that*, they're *more* precious to *him* than they are to *us*.
- ❖ We *know* this because *often* when our dreams seem too *difficult* or *costly*, we'll try to be more "*realistic*," and settle for something *less*.
- ❖ But when *Jesus* saw how far away we were from the very best, he died a horrific death so that it might still be *ours*.

Now, in our *best* moments, knowing that we're *loved that much* moves us to *tears* and *stirs everything* in us, so that we *pledge* not to let *anything* hold us back from becoming what *Jesus* sees in *us*.

- ❖ But what about when our worlds *collide*, and *God's reality* breaks into our *fantasy*?
- ❖ How do we respond when we're *confronted* by the fact that the *new* life God *promises only* comes through the *death* of some *dream* or *desire*?

At *those* times, it's easy to turn *away* from what God is doing and *reject* it, or look for a way to *compromise*.

- ❖ We're like the block of marble that would be *satisfied* to remain a *shapeless lump* instead of a great *masterpiece* if it meant that the sculptor would just *stop hammering, chipping, and polishing*.
- ❖ The *demands* of Jesus' love *keep* us from seeing *beauty* of it, and our *faith shrinks* and *enthusiasm fades*.

This is when we need Mary to come with the tenderness of a mother and "magnify" the Lord for us.

- ❖ We need her to put a comforting arm around and say, "No, no, look a little closer," and show us more than we could have seen on our own.
- ❖ Jesus gives us Mary to help us learn to receive God's love, just as she did at the Annunciation, and to form our hearts just as she did his.

How does the Blessed Mother do this?

- ❖ When difficult things come into our lives, she helps us to open our hearts to receive them, just as she pondered and treasured the hard and strange things God sent into hers.
- ❖ When we feel empty, just like at the wedding at Cana, she leads Jesus to what is lacking in us, and she encourages us, like the servants there, to do whatever he tells us.
- ❖ When we struggle to carry our cross, seeming to fall again and again, Mary rushes to comfort us just as she comforted Jesus as he carried his.
- ❖ When we suffer the little deaths of plans or dreams, she stays close beside us, just as she stayed at the foot of the cross.

Most importantly, through all these things she shows us the goodness of God's love and teaches us her song of praise, so that we too can invite the whole world join in.

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