

Advent 4

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38



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*God of courage and fulfilment, help us to make Mary's Song
our song — the song of our lives and of our work;
the song of the Church and its life and work in the world.*

Amen.

A series of Advent devotions prepared by the leaders of
Anglican and Lutheran churches in full communion

by Fried Hiltz

Like you, I am always glad to come to this fourth Sunday of Advent and its focus on Mary's role in God's plan for the redemption of the world. Mary is chosen by God to carry the holy child in her womb. Mary is both favoured and troubled by the angel's message.

Gabriel assures Mary that what is to be conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. Called to be the very vessel through whom the word of God becomes flesh of our flesh, Mary will be known through every age as *Theotokos* — the one who bears God. Through Mary, God will inhabit the world in the likeness of our human form, walk this earth and announce the reign of divine reconciliation, justice and peace for all people.

Of this moment of annunciation, much has been offered by way of commentary through the centuries.

I am personally intrigued by how Marie Azzarello, a sister of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame religious community in Montreal, speaks of the moment in her book, *Mary: The First Disciple*. She writes: "... in many analyses it is a moment of consent. She did consent but it is important to note that she freely gave her consent. Otherwise we see her only as a passive, docile, obedient woman rather than a strong and courageous woman, prepared to live with the Holy Spirit working in and through her life, one in whom the purposes of God are fulfilled not only for her own moment in time but indeed for all time".

Mary's moment of annunciation is followed quickly by her visit to Elizabeth. As they greet one another, one's word becomes known in time as the Hail Mary and the other as Mary's Song or the Magnificat.

Of Mary's Song "it would be taken," writes Herbert

O'Driscoll in *Portrait of a Woman*, "from her lips and be augmented into a mighty anthem echoing in basilica and cathedral. In the centuries long monastic round of daily offices it would be the song that welcomes the approach of evening, the center point around which a jewel called English evensong would revolved. Yet it would also be a dark and terrible song of revolution quoted in societies moving through political turmoil, or continents seething with a desire for change."

Truly it is the song of so many in our day.

Of Mary's Song, Azzarello writes, "to pray the Magnificat each day as a disciple of Jesus is to pray in union with Mary in joy, faith, and thanksgiving to God as the source of our being; it is to sing of God's everlasting love and mercy which extends from age to age and to proclaim Mary's hope in the fulfilment of the divine promises in favour of the whole of humanity... To pray the Magnificat is an expression of our desire to be honest about the state of our world and shows our conviction that the kingdom of God that Jesus preached is not a vision for an end time but a vision that begins now, in this world..."

This is strong commentary and it is a challenge to live the gospel of which we sing.

It leaves me pondering to what extent Mary's Song is truly my song; the song of my life and my work; the song of the Church and its life and work in the world.