

# Mary Was Amazed

December 22

O God, who, seeing the human race fallen into death,  
willed to redeem it by the coming of your Only Begotten Son,  
grant, we pray,  
that those who confess his Incarnation with humble fervor  
may merit his company as their Redeemer.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
One God, for ever and ever.

*Read Luke 1:46-56*

'Tis the longest night of the year; the winter solstice is upon us. You may have noticed, that “my heart exalts in the Lord my Savior.” This song of Mary, and song of Hannah, has been reserved for this day. Because when it gets the darkest, we sing more insistently of a light that never fails. Mary was amazed. She was struck with wonder and awe and amazement. The greeting that Elizabeth had given her when she arrived was, “How is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” And then there was the triple blessing: “Blessed are you among women,” “Blessed is the fruit of your womb,” “Blessed are you who believe that the Lord’s word to her would be fulfilled.” Mary, in response to this triple blessing, erupts into an aria; a wonderful song of praise. St. Ephraim, in the fourth century, reminds us that here is the moment she sums up everything there is to know about the work of salvation and her place in it. She is not God; she is the mother of God. This is not anything about what she accomplished. It is about everything that God asked of her, and her “yes”. But it was God who did all this. All these things have happened, she knows, in spite of the lowliness of her position. This humility. “He has regarded the low estate of His handmaid. And from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed.” Blessed are you among women.

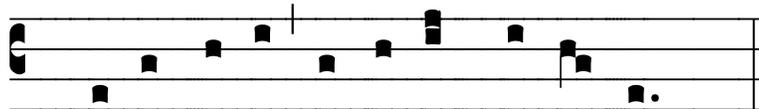
So, Mary proclaims the new kingdom. The new kingdom is this: He will do great things, He will be mercy for those who fear Him. The proud will be confused in their innermost thoughts. And humility is the queen of all the virtues. This is what she sums up for us. Now, we have not done a great job of explaining this to our Protestant brothers and sisters, and it is unfortunate, because they think that we worship her. I once saw on the Internet that if I put a picture of my mother (who passed away in 2011) up on the wall, put a rose in front of it, and lit a candle and asked her to pray for me, no one would think twice of it. If I did this for Mary, most of the Christian world would think I have lost my mind. But she is our mother. She is our mother in the order of grace. We give ourselves to her because Jesus chose her as the perfect means to unite Him to us and us to Him. That is who she is; she is the perfect means to unite us to Jesus and Jesus to us. We come to her because she gives us Jesus. It is entirely the initiative of God that we celebrate her. It is entirely the initiative of God that our salvation should be born of her and from her; that our salvation comes through her. So, if we reject Mary, we reject Christ. If we reject Mary, we reject God. We reject God’s work, we reject God’s will. If we reject Mary, we reject grace. But God is our only desire and His grace is what we need, and this grace is given to us first, through Mary; she is the one who gave Him birth.

So Mary, unknown, from an insignificant part of the world; – no one knew who she was. But in the midst of this humanity, God acted. God conceived in her the Living Word of God. She gave birth to God in our world. She, with Joseph, raised Him, and gave Him to us. So, she was amazed! She was struck by wonder and awe. So, the

question is: are you? Mary erupted in a song of praise that from the depth of her heart, she rejoiced in everything that God has done. And the question remains, is that us too? Will we do that? In spite of the darkness of the world – because the world impresses that darkness upon us – are we willing to continue singing? To continue praising? To continue rejoicing in everything that she gave us? This is our task. This is what it means to be His people; that we have the same love, joy, and appreciation in her that even Jesus has.

1 Samuel 2: 1, 4-5, 6-7, 8

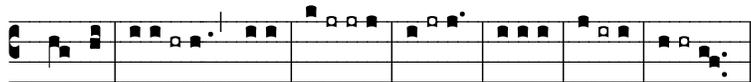
VII a



**My heart ex-ul-ts in the Lord, my Sav- ior.**

*Flex: + + ,*

VII a



“My heart/ ex-/ul-**ts in/** the LORD, \* my horn is ex-/**alt-ed/ in** (my) God.  
 --/I have/ **swal**(lowed up) my/ **e**-(ne)mies; \* I rejoice/ **in my / vic**(to)ry.”

“The bows/ of the/ **migh**(ty) are/ **broken**, \* while the/ **tot**(ter)ing/  
**gird** (on) strength.  
 --/The well-fed/ **hire** (them)selves/ **out** (for) bread, \* while the hungry/  
**bat**-ten/ **on** spoil.  
 --/The barren/ **wife bears/ sev**(en) sons, \* while the mother of/ **ma**-ny/  
**lan**- (guish)es.”

*flex: + ,*

“The LORD/ puts to death and **gives** life; he/**casts** (down to) the/ **neth**(er) world; \*  
 He/**raises/ up** (a)gain.  
 --/The LORD makes/ **poor and/ makes** rich, \* he humbles, he/ **al**-so /**ex**-alts.”

“He rais-/es the/ **need**-y/ **from** (the) dust; \* from the dung heap/ **he lifts/**  
**up** (the) poor,  
 --/To /**seat** (them) with/ **no**-bles \* and make a glorious/ **throne their /he**(ri)tage.”