

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The miracles are simply too many to count: She who was barren now carries the man child prophesied four centuries before by Malachi. The Elijah who is to come comes through her womb. The Blessed Virgin who has known no man bears the God who gave Malachi that Word of prophecy. It is unto His maidservant according to His Word. The Holy Ghost has come upon her, the power of the Most High has overshadowed her, and she has conceived in her womb.

She bears the Son the archangel announced, the Son of God whose name shall be JESUS. But now she carries that Child in the mysterious darkness of her womb, the Lamp for a little while concealed by the basket of her flesh. She carries the One who will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; the One to whom the Lord God will give the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

He who is sent to prepare the way leaps at the voice that marks His Divine presence. He for Whom the way is prepared, the Beloved, stands behind what David's Son Solomon in his superlative Song calls "our wall", the wall of human flesh, as David's Son and David's Lord gazes through the lattice of Mary's womb.

Adam saw Him. Moses saw Him face to face. Isaiah saw Him. Ezekiel saw Him. John hears Him through the greeting of the God-Bearer, and leaps to hear as did the Jews at the reading of the Isaiah scroll, which testifies of Him. The Infant Prophet cannot be still in the presence of the Divine Sacrifice that takes away his sins.

His leap is a kinetic homily, a Christological exposition. His leap is a joyous uterine liturgy, a pre-natal Divine Service, the rite, rubric and ceremony finding their Center and Hope filling the closed womb of the Lord's maidservant. For as God promised through Ezekiel, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut."

The Divine Mystery magnified, at the sound of the Virgin's voice she who was barren but miraculously conceived was filled with the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit she declared Mary to be what the Archangel Gabriel declared her to be: "Blessed are you among women!" And by the same Spirit, the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son filling Mary's womb, Elizabeth calls Mary the "Mother of my Lord."

He who leapt in the water of his mother's womb would soon preach the same Savior from the waters of the Jordan. And He to whom that leap pointed would soon be called Lamb of God - and blasphemer.

For the Divine Son the closed womb would give way to the sealed tomb. And while the organ of His conception was Mary's ear, it would be by scourge and cross that He would fill the tomb. The fruit of her womb would hang from the tree, and fall lifeless to the ground. And a sword would pierce Mary's soul too.

God became Man to redeem fallen men. His miraculous conception and birth, just like His gruesome suffering a death, was for you. He suffered and died to pay the price for your

fallenness, to settle the account with God that you could never satisfy. He gave His life, He shed His precious Blood, that your sins be forgiven. He was laid in the tomb to sanctify the grave of every Christian as a resting place until His voice calls us forth.

In Christ, all your sins are forgiven. In Christ, your death is overcome. In Christ, you have life that cannot be taken away. And all these benefits He freely gives to you, you who believe in Him. It is too good to be true, and yet it, thanks be to God, is true. It is true for you, you who are baptized into Him, you, in whom saving faith has been worked by the Holy Ghost, you who hunger for His Word and for His Sacred Mysteries.

So your soul too magnifies the Lord, and your spirit rejoices in God your Savior. For He has regarded your lowly estate, and in Him are you eternally blessed. He who is Mighty has done great things for you, and Holy is His Name, the very Name He has placed upon you.

His mercy is upon you who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His Arm, the Arm of the Lord made bare, the Word who became Flesh. By His humiliation He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. The King of Kings has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly.

He has exalted you, you who rejoice in hope, you who are patient in tribulation, you who continue steadfastly in prayer. He has exalted you as He rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, sanctifying flesh, and opening heaven to men.

In His great love for you, He fills the hungry with good things. He gives you your daily bread. He feeds you on His Word. And He fills you with Good Things as He banquets you on His Body and Blood this night, the fruit of Mary's womb, the fruit of the tree of the cross, the Body crucified, risen and ascended. He fills you with Good Things as the Blood He shed on the cross fills the Chalice and is poured into you, for your forgiveness and life.

You believe, eat and drink, and He helps you in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever. For in Christ, you are made a true child of Abraham, for you too believe God, and it is credited unto you as righteousness.

In His mercy, in His grace, in His great love for you, this night the Christ that filled Mary's womb visits you. He comes to you in His Mysteries, that you be filled with Him. And soon will your Beloved return. Soon will the Groom come to call His Bride. And then He will say to you "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away", as He takes you in His gleaming train to dwell with Him in heaven forever.

Now, with Solomon, you can pray in faith Lord, "...let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely." And blessed are you who believe, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told to you from the Lord.

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