

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

He who was announced by the archangel and conceived by the Holy Ghost grew in the new Holy of Holies, the womb of Mary. For where God dwells physically, there is the holiest place on earth. In the mysterious, chaste and uncorrupted confines of Mary's womb, God took on Flesh. But His enfleshment followed the beginning of His state of humiliation. His glory and power and majesty were veiled in human form and buried in the sealed womb. He came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.

Hidden or not, faith knows Christ. Faith sees Christ, even when He conceals Himself in Flesh, in suffering, in Bread, in Wine, or in the safety of the womb. The vessel that bears Christ is known by faith. So the Ark of the Covenant was holy because the Presence of the Glory of God made it holy. And so the virgin vessel that concealed the God of heaven and earth caused Elizabeth to proclaim her, as had the angel, blessed.

But this revelation was not of Elizabeth herself. Blessed too was that daughter of Aaron, for flesh and blood did not reveal it to her. It is the Spirit that works faith and confession. It is the Spirit that brings men to Christ. So the Scripture records "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke..."

And to the same Virgin that the archangel greeted "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women...", Elizabeth said "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." But like that holy vessel below the Mercy Seat, her blessedness was not her own. It was only a dim reflection of the Divine One who filled her womb.

And there was a Prophet in that place, a Prophet not yet fully formed, the promised Elijah who was to come, a Prophet who too was concealed by the matronly barriers of his mother's flesh. Elizabeth's God-given son, son of Zacharias whose prayers were heard by God, John who would baptize was growing inside his mother.

But as Solomon prophesied nine centuries before in his superlative Song of his Seed, the Savior, "Behold, he stands behind our wall; He is looking through the windows, Gazing through the lattice... My beloved spoke and said to me 'Rise up...'" So at the presence of his Lord, the Seed veiled in the lattice of Mary's womb, that bounding nascent John obeyed.

And in his leaping he pointed not to himself, not to his mother, not to Mary, but to Christ, Christ yet hidden in Mary's womb. The prophet pointed to the Promised Prophet like Moses, who would be raised up from among His brethren. John preached a kinetic prenatal homily, pointing, as all true Prophets do, to Jesus. For faith is not restrained by womb or darkness, by barriers or age.

If one must become as a child to enter the Kingdom of God, how much more John as he proclaims Christ even before his birth. True faith, saving faith, confesses Christ, even when He is veiled or unseen, even when He is humbled and persecuted, indeed faith proclaims Christ even in death.

Solomon prophesied “The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me; The keepers of the walls Took my veil away from me.” So it was that the Christ John proclaimed was stripped of His tunic and crucified. Now His veil was weakness and suffering, humiliation and darkness, abandonment and death.

So it is with unbelief. Unbelief cannot see Christ. And your sins, your transgressions, your self-indulgent trespasses, are signs of that blindness. And were it not for the grace of God, that blindness would end in eternal separation from God. But that you be saved, that you be freed from sin and eternal death, He who once knew the dark confines of Mary’s womb rested three days in the dark confines of the garden tomb.

In the wisdom God alone can give, David’s son Solomon prophesied: “Who *is* this coming out of the wilderness, Like pillars of smoke, Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, With all the merchant's fragrant powders?” So it was that He who led Israel through the desert in the pillar of smoke, still spiced with the wrappings of the grave, emerged from the wilderness of death and emptied the garden tomb.

He abandoned that tomb as He had abandoned Mary’s womb - miraculously, from the dark womb birth unto life, from the dark tomb from death new life, eternal life, life that cannot be taken away, life He shares with all those who believe in Him. He shares His life with you, dear Christian.

He shares that life with you, you who are born from above in the water set apart for holy use by John’s baptism of Christ in the Jordan waters, waters which flow over Christ and into the font, waters that wash you clean, waters that remove your sins and carry them back to Christ, who bore them on the cross. In Him, you are forgiven. In Him, your sins are removed. In Him, your death is removed, and you are given new life in the womb of the Church, the font, by the working of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

Miraculously delivered from Mary’s womb, without injury to her, He was wrapped in the cloths that pointed to His gravecloths, and He was laid in a manger. For a time, a feeding trough was His abode, showing forth in the House of Bread the very Bread of Life, who would make His Body Food and His Blood drink not for beasts of burden, but for you, for the forgiveness and life of all those who receive Him.

And it is yours this day to eat that Body and drink that Blood, the Communion which incorporates you into the Body of Christ which is the Holy Church. Faith knows Christ, even when He is hidden. Faith sees Christ, even when He conceals Himself in Bread and in Wine. The vessel that bears Christ is known by faith. Just as John knew Christ and lept in the womb, so you know that in Bread and Wine you receive the same Christ.

You eat and drink, and you receive your Savior, who fills the hungry with Good Things. And with Mary your faith, saving faith, confesses “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name.”

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