

## RE-ENCHANTING (MOTHER) MARY

Rev. Gusti Linnea Newquist

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Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church

### Luke 1:47-55 Living Bible (TLB)

How I rejoice in God my Savior! Who took notice of this lowly servant girl, and now generation after generation forever shall call me blest of God. For God, the mighty Holy One, has done great things to me. The mercy of God goes on from generation to generation, to all who offer reverence.

“How powerful is the mighty arm of God! Who scatters the proud and haughty ones! Who has torn princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. Who has satisfied the hungry hearts and sent the rich away with empty hands. Who has helped this servant Israel! Who has not forgotten the promise to be merciful. Who promised our forbears—Abraham and his children—to be merciful to them forever.”

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The Living Bible ... published in 1971 ... is a paraphrase of the Old and New Testaments. Its purpose is to say as exactly as possible what the writers of the Scriptures meant, and to say it simply, expanding where necessary for a clear understanding by the modern reader.

In many ways ... The Living Bible stands in direct contrast to The King James Version ... which translates the Greek and Hebrew in as poetic a manner as possible ... often obscuring the direct meaning of the text ... often intentionally ...

For example ... many of us grew up hearing the Christmas story directly from the King James version ... usually read in a deep gravelly voice ... “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus ... And Joseph also went up ... unto the city of David ... To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.”

There was an air of deep mystery about the whole thing ... wasn't there? Perhaps even “enchanted” ... definitely inviting reverence ... infinitely holy. You wouldn't dare make light of the situation.

You can imagine ... then ... what happens ... sometime in the mid-70s ... when a cool, hip new pastor introduces the Living Bible to the Christmas Pageant ... and you hear instead ... “Joseph took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was obviously pregnant by this time.”

Having just learned himself about the birds and the bees ... the budding adolescent cries out ... right there in the middle of the pageant ... much to the chagrin of his parents ... “Mary was pregnant?!”

And there went the mystery of the incarnation ...

Yes, folks ... Mary is pregnant ... really actually pregnant ... regardless of the circumstances of the conception.

She has morning sickness. She feels bloated. She has to use the bathroom a lot! She tires easily. She sends Joseph out in the middle of the night for pickles and ice cream. Her feet and ankles swell. She can't sleep. She can't get comfortable.

She maybe even develops hemorrhoids.

And she sings her way through it ... as so many women do ... especially when the pregnancy is unplanned ... especially when her pregnancy invites shame and ridicule ... especially when she is clinging to the conviction that ... even so ... her child is wanted ... beloved ... a precious gift to behold.

“My soul gives glory to my God” ... Mary cries out ... with a joyful shout ... “My heart pours out its praise. God lifted up my lowliness in many marvelous ways.”

More here about singing ... “encantare” “to sing over”

These words come to be used against her ... I am afraid ... in the centuries and millennia that come ... O gentle Mary, meek and mild, humble and lowly ... in her rightful, womanly place ... “great with child” ... but never once complaining ...

To which I say, “Humbug!”

Her name alone ... Mary ... argues otherwise.

It means “rebellious.”

It is the Latin form of “Miriam” ... the sister of Moses ... who led her people dancing and singing across the Red Sea ... out of bondage in Egypt and into a journey toward freedom.

Mary is a leader! A fighter! A dreamer, just like Joseph.

And she has a vision ...

A longing for some feminine face of divine grace to comfort us when all is not well. “Hail Mary,” we sing to a woman who, in some mysterious way, becomes *our* mother in this Advent season. She is a mother who demands active hope in the midst of despair, as we light the first Advent candle of hope. She demands active peace in the midst of war, as we light the second Advent candle of peace. She demands active joy in the midst of sorrow in the third candle. And active love in the midst of apathy, as we light the fourth today.