

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Luke chapter 1 verses 46 to 55 is called the Magnificat. It is a Latin term that has been used to label this section (Magnificat is Latin for magnify). This is where Mary says to Elizabeth that she is going to do whatever God wants her to do. It's a powerful statement, and it's one that I wonder how many of us would make today. Let me explain why I say this.

Saint Luke says that Mary went into the Judean Hill country to visit Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth. We aren't told much about the relationship between Mary and these two people. However, since Mary was going to visit them, we assume that there were relatives of some sort. It is odd only because relatives usually lived in the same village or city. However, we won't argue with what Luke's author is telling us. We really don't know where Mary started from, and we assume that it's Nazareth because that's where Jesus grew up. Therefore, there are a couple of things that are missing from Luke's gospel. I always find that amazing because Luke started his gospel off by saying that he's going to be historically accurate about the story. We have some traditional items that are not included in the gospel. It makes perfect sense.

People consider Elizabeth to be a prophetess. The reason is the author says that she was filled with the Holy Spirit. This is an idiom saying that she was a prophet and was going to be speaking the words that the Lord gave her. Mary comes to see Elizabeth and the baby inside of Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy. Elizabeth then looks at Mary and declares that she is looking at the mother of the Messiah. This is a prophecy. Saint Luke wanted us all to realize that we have a more modern prophecy than just a bunch of prophets out of the Hebrew Scripture. That's the main purpose of the visit. I should say that's the first part of the visit.

The second part of the visit is Mary's exclamation that she is a servant of the Lord and will do whatever the Lord needs her to do. Now you might sit there thinking, what's so difficult about just giving birth to the Savior? Well, it's a big deal. In Mary's day, a girl who got pregnant outside of marriage would be rejected by society and ejected from her family. If she was betrothed, as Mary was, her husband-to-be would issue a divorce certificate and walk away from her. When this happened, the poor young girl would not have a family to live with anymore and, in fact, she wouldn't even have a house to live in. What would she do to make a living and to support this unborn child? She would have to go into some type of servitude. Most girls that ended up in this situation ended up going into prostitution because that was the only work that they could find. So, Mary was taking an enormous risk by doing what the Lord told her to do.

The Lord spoke to Joseph to tell him that the baby was from God and that he needed to protect Mary and the baby. Therefore, Joseph did not divorce her, and he took Mary and the child as his own. Even for him, there was a minor risk involved. However, we could investigate the book of Hosea to find something quite similar. Hosea married a prostitute and brought her into the graces of God. Now, to be clear, I am not saying that Mary was a prostitute. Like Joseph, Hosea married a girl who would have been unmarriageable. The Lord commanded both to do this and for each of them, things turned out to be not so bad.

One lesson we should learn from this is that when the Lord God asks you to do something you should do it. Mary did not question if she should have the baby. Instead, she glorified God in the Magnificat. The author is conveying to us the joy that Mary had in her heart that she could fulfill the commandments of God.

Have you been called to do something for the Lord? Many people have been called to do things for the Lord and many people ignore the calling. When I was in seminary, in the introductory course, we students sat around a roundtable and one by one explained our calling. Out of the 4 of us, 2 said that they felt called months or years ago, but we simply ignored what the Lord was saying to us. Personally, if it wasn't for Erin, my wife, I don't know that I would have made the jump. I am not one of the ones who could claim that they were following God's instruction immediately. When I felt the call, I resisted it for months and months. In this class we talked about it and realized that we were happy that the Lord did not give up on us. Therefore, we learned that even if you say no, God's going to come after you anyway if he wants you to do something for him.

The hardest part of coming to the Lord's work was that I had to give up my lucrative computer engineering job. What I've learned through that experience is that indeed the Lord does supply the opportunities that I needed to take care of my family. Every time a door (a challenge) popped up in front of us, the doors were opened, and I walked through. Erin and I grew stronger in our faith as we learned that God had wonderful plans for us.

I encourage you to find out what the Lord wants you to do and be like Mary and just do it. God will take care of you. That is a guarantee that's in the Bible especially for those who are doing God's mission. I pray that you find out what your purpose is for the Lord and that you have the courage and faith, like Mary, to do it.

Amen.