

*This short document consists of reflections pertaining to the Gospel for the Feast of the Assumption, 15 August. The Gospel at hand is Luke 1.39-56. It forms part of a request from George Lazarte, Manila, The Philippines, with regard to an outline of the Gospel for the Assumption. Date completed, 6 August 2002.*

**Vs. 39: In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah,**

-“in those days:” a time intended to introduce a series of events but lacks a special temporal location. Compare with vs. 5 (“in the days of Herod, king of Judea”) and vs. 24 (“after these days his wife Elizabeth conceived”).

-*with haste* (spoude): also implies diligence as in Rom 12.11: “Never flag in *zeal*, be aglow with the Spirit.” Combined with the verb “to arise,” it can indicate resolve or purpose for the journey ahead which was obviously fraught with difficulty of travel, i.e., the “hill country.”

**Vs. 40: and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.**

A continuation of the previous verse. Many verses in this excerpt from the Gospel begin with “and” as to indicate continuous action and to show a connection of events. Note the parallel between Mary’s “arising,” going “with haste” and finally “entering” the house.

-*Entered* (eiserchomai): the preposition eis (*into*) prefixed to the verb and combined with another eis indicates seriousness of intent as well as an abiding there for an extended period of time (“three months,” vs. 56).

-*Greeted* (aspazomai): “And if you *salute* only your brethren, what more are you doing than others” [Mt 5.47]? This verb can also mean to “bid farewell.”

**Vs. 41: And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit**

-Note the parallel between Elizabeth’s hearing the *greeting* (aspasmos) and the babe (John the Baptist) who *leaped* (skirtao) in her womb. For two Old Testament LXX uses of this verb: 1) Gen 25.22: “The children *struggled* together within her” which is in reference to Jacob and Esau. 2) The mountains *skipped* like rams, the hills like lambs.”

-*Babe* (brephos): in the sense of a fetus or a newly born child. “Like newborn *babes*, long for the pure spiritual milk” [1 Pt 2.2].

-Immediately following this hearing/greeting, Elizabeth was *filled* (pleroo) with the Holy Spirit. This verb connotes a bringing to pass as well as perfection. Cf. 1.15: “and he will be *filled* with the Holy Spirit” in reference to the birth of John the Baptist. I.e., both unborn son and mother partook of the same fullness.

**Vs. 42: and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”**

A continuation from the previous verse; again, note “and” which connects all events together and brings them into a harmonious whole.

-*Exclaimed* (anaphoneo): the only use of this verb in the New Testament. For an Old Testament use (LXX), cf. 1 Chron 15.28: “So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with *shouting*.”

-*Blessed* (eulogemenos): used twice in this verse and different from makarios which is used in connection with the Beatitudes. This adjective has the root for the noun logos (*word*); it literally means, “well said.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has *blessed* us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.”

-*Among* (en): literally, “in.”

-*Womb*: compare with Lk 11.27: “A woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, ‘Blessed is the *womb* that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!’” Here the adjective makarios is used as opposed to eulogemenos.

### **Vs. 43: And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**

-*Granted* (pothen): instead of a verb in English, the Greek has the equivalent of “whence.”

-The “angel of the Lord” (cf. vs. 11, Gabriel but not revealed at first) prophesied to Zechariah that his wife would give birth to a special child though not the Messiah. In the verse at hand, Elizabeth is quick to recognize that Mary is the mother of her *Lord* or Kurios and therefore has a superior position. I.e., the relationship between Elizabeth and Mary foreshadows a similar relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

### **Vs. 44: For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy.**

-*Behold* (idou): same expression used by Mary earlier: “*Behold*, I am the handmaid of the Lord.”

-Note the intimate relationship between Mary’s *greeting* (aspasmos; cf. vs. 21)—rather, “voice” which intensifies it—and John having *leaped* (skirtao again, cf. vs. 41).

-Two interesting uses of prepositions: literally, “*into* (eis) my ears” and “leaped *for* (en, in) joy.”

### **Vs. 45: And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”**

-*Blessed* (makarios): contrast with eulogemenos noted earlier. Makarios is rather static compared with the Hebrew ‘ashry used, for example, in the opening words of the Psalter: “*Blessed* is the man...” ‘Ashry derives from the same verbal root as the relative pronouns, “who, which, that.” It connotes a state of transition, of moving forward and not standing still.

-*Fulfillment* (teleiosis): compare with “filled” of vs. 21. This noun also means “accomplishment, “consummation.” “Now if *perfection* had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood” [Heb 7.11].

-“*From* the Lord” (para): this preposition can also mean “beside,” intimating something like “in the company”/“presence of.” It is frequently used in the Last Discourse: “For all that I have heard *from* (para) my Father I have made known to you” [Jn 15.15].

#### **Vs. 46: And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,**

-Vss. 47-55 contain what the Catholic Church calls the Magnificat, much of which is taken from 1 Sam 2.1-10. Therefore this excerpt should be kept parallel to the Magnificat.

Frequency mention to this text (i.e., in Hebrew) will be noted and inserted throughout.

-*Magnifies* (megalouno): in the sense of extolling, celebrating. “None of the rest dared join them, but the people *held* them in *high honor*” [Acts 5.13]. In the verse at hand, it is not so much Mary doing this but her *soul* or psuche or one’s vital force which contains the seat of feelings and desires. The Hebrew for psuche here is lev or *heart*.

#### **Vs. 47: and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**

-Here we have mention of Mary’s *spirit* or pneuma which differs from her psuche of the previous verse. The Samuel text lacks an equivalent.

-*Rejoices* (agalliao): in the sense of expressing extreme joy. “And you were willing to *rejoice* for a while in his (John the Baptist) light” [Jn 5.35]. The Hebrew equivalent is halatz: “Let not my enemies *exult* over me” [Ps 25.2]. Such rejoicing is done “in God” or literally, *upon* (epi) God. The Samuel text reads literally, “My horn is exalted in the Lord.” The Hebrew for *Savior* is Yeshuah, the proper name for Jesus; the preposition b- is prefixed to it or “*in* my Savior.”

#### **Vs. 48: for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;**

-*Regarded* (epiblepo): connotes a sense of care or concern: “and you *pay attention* to the one who wears the fine clothing” [Jms 2.3].

-The object of such “looking *upon* (epi)” is Mary’s *low estate* (tapeinosis) which also can mean a type of spiritual abasement: “who will change our *lowly* body (i.e., ‘the body of lowliness’) to be like his glorious body” [Phil 3.21].

-*Handmaiden* (doule): to which belongs tapeinosis; doule is the female form of doulos or *slave*. “Behold, I am the *handmaid* of the Lord” [1.38].

-*Behold* (idou): as used in vs. 44 in order to introduce “all *generations*” (genea). “Look toward heaven and number the stars...So shall your *descendants* be” [Gen 15.5].

-*Call blessed* (makarizo): cf. makarios as in vs. 45. The only other New Testament reference is Jms 5.11: “Behold, we *call* those *happy* who were steadfast.”

**Vs. 49: for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.**

-Compare *mighty* (dunatos) with *great things* (megala); the former belongs to God and the latter to Mary and may be taken to represent a transference from one to the other or from the divine to the human. The action is in the past tense which is interesting to keep in mind because Mary's child Jesus is not yet born.

-“Holy and terrible is his name” [Ps 111.9]!

**Vs. 50: And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation.**

-*Mercy* (eleos): the equivalent to the Hebrew chesed, often translated as *loving kindness*. Such eleos literally is transmitted “into (eis) generation and generation.”

-“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who *fear* him” [Ps 103.13].

**Vs. 51: He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.**

-*Shown* (poieo): literally, “made.”

-“Arm:” the agent by which divine kratos (*strength*) is imparted. Compare with dunatos and megala, vs. 49.

-*Scattered* (diaskorpizo): also as “to squander,” “to waste:” “but to gather into one the children of God who are *scattered* abroad” [Jn 11.52]. Such dispersal is made more intense by the preposition dia (*through*) which indicates thoroughness.

-The object of this scattering are persons who are *proud* or huperephanos: “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the *proud* but gives grace to the humble’” [1 Pt 5.5]. Quotation is from Prov 3.34.

-Such pride has a specific location or origin: not simply in the *heart* (kardia) but in the *imagination* or dianoa. This term has a wide variety of meanings and applies to the faculty of understanding, feeling and desire. It also means “thought.” “We all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and *mind*, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” [Eph 2.3]. The verse at hand literally reads, “in the imagination of the heart of theirs.”

**Vs. 52: he has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree;**

-*Put down* (kathaireo): in the sense of bringing to destruction or ruin. “I will *pull down* my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods” [Lk 12.18]. The object of the verb in vs. 52 is *mighty* (dunastes) in the sense of a prince or royal minister. “Who made you a *ruler* and a judge over us” [Acts 7.27]?

-*Exalted* (hupsuo): the opposite of kathaireo; here in reference to persons of *low degree* or tapeinos, the adjective related to Mary's “low estate” in vs. 48.

**Vs. 53: he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.**

-*Filled* (emplemi): a verb closely related vs. 41, “And Elizabeth was *filled* (pleroo) with the Holy Spirit.” The object of such filling is *good things* (agathon); it can pertain to physical nourishment but has a broader meaning as being filled with divine benefits. Cf. Ps 107.9 which closely parallels the verse at hand: “For he satisfies him who is thirsty, and the hungry he fills with *good things*.”

-*Sent away* (exapostello): note the two prepositions comprising this verb to emphasize the “emptiness” of the rich: ex (*from* in the sense of “out”) and apo (*away from*); i.e., two “froms” to indicate complete dismissal.

**Vs. 54: He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy,**

-*Helped* (antilambano): the preposition anti suggests doing or taking something in return. “In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must *help* the weak” [Acts 13.25].

-The object of such reciprocal assistance is Israel as *servant* or paidos or more accurately, “child.”

-God’s help is effected with the assistance of the recollective faculty or *remembrance* (mimneskomai). “He has *remembered* his steadfast love and faithfulness” [Ps 98.3].

This verb is used in the Hebrew sense of *zakar* (*to remember*); from it is derived the noun *zakar* (*male*) or agent for propagation of the human species.

-Such divine remembering is bound up with *mercy* or eleos noted vs. 50 as translation of the Hebrew *chesed* which has a deeper, more inclusive sense.

**Vs. 55: as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.”**

The close of the Magnificat which ends with the beginning, that is, the divine promise to Abraham in Gen 17.7, 18.18 and 22.17. The first Genesis verse reads: “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.”

-“Fathers” could also apply to those patriarchs existing before and after Abraham.

-*Posterity* (sperma): literally, “seed.” “And in your *posterity* shall all the families of the earth be blessed” [Acts 3.25 citing Gen 22.18].

-*Forever* (eis ton aiona): literally, “into the ages.” Note the use of pros (*to, towards*, in reference to “our fathers” and “*into* (eis) the ages.” I.e., both suggest an orientation towards the future which lacks cessation.

**Vs. 56: And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.**

-That is, Elizabeth, after which Mary returned home, literally, “*into* (eis) her house.” This

concluding verse sets the stage for the birth of John the Baptist (vss. 57+). John is the herald of Jesus Christ, but in a sense, Mary's abiding with Elizabeth during her pregnancy reverses the role: Jesus heralds the birth of John.

**+ The End +**