

Week Two/Day Six: *Thankful Praise*

1. Place yourself in God's presence

2. Ask Him for the grace you seek: *to acquire knowledge of yourself and the graces of true gratitude and joy*

3. Today's Meditation:

My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior (Lk 1:46-47).

Since today is Thanksgiving Day, I think that best thing we should examine ourselves on with Mary's help is gratitude. But not only gratitude, also joy. For many people today will be a day of gratitude and joy. But are we living true gratitude? Are we after true joy (happiness)?

May Mary's example and this reflection from a wise and good ole-fashioned Jesuit (Fr. John Hardon) help us.

Taking out some of the striking features of the Magnificat, we begin with Mary's gratitude, "My soul magnifies the Lord." My soul adores, praises, and honors the Lord. The stress is always on 'the Lord.'

What a contrast between Mary's attitude and that of so many people over the centuries, including our own day. Think of all the honor medals and statues dedicated to human beings, who are sadly undeserving of praise, but rather often condemnation. Who were the great heroes about whom we read and whose exploits we memorized; the men who ran roughshod over human beings, and who destroyed empires in order to achieve their ambitions. We all know about Napoleon and how few remember the Pope he forced into exile. How strange that we should be so ready to praise weak human flesh that dying soon decays.

Let us examine our consciences on how seldom we praise God. Yet faith tells us that prayers of praise and adoration are the most important form of prayer. For, unless this form of prayer is at least implicit, we are not even praying. Unless we praise God, magnifying Him, we are not acknowledging God for Who He is and ourselves for what we are. How God longs for us to tell Him: "How great Thou art, O Lord, how great Thou art!"

And by contrast, how unimportant, how trifling is everything and everyone else. Having said, "My soul magnifies the Lord," Mary immediately adds, "And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Joy follows gratitude and praise.

God really wants us to be happy. He wants us to rejoice in Him, but on His conditions: in doing His Will and not the world's or the evil spirit's or as our natural inclinations urge. What a lie to think that joy is found in our self-will. Hell was born of that myth.

Not even speaking of Heaven, there is no other true joy on earth except in God, with God, and because God became man, like God. Mary had a clear idea of who she was, that she was the Mother of the Messiah, even as Elizabeth had told her she was the 'mother of the Lord Who made her.' Mary also knew by whose favor she was thus blessed. Compare the two phrases "lowliness of His handmaid" and "He that is mighty has done great things for me." God did do great things for Mary because in her own estimation she was His lowly servant. This is all God asks us to tell Him: "You alone are mighty and I, except for You, am nothing; and the moment my conscience tells me You have spoken, I don't for a second wish to hesitate doing what you ask."

True joy then comes in following God's will freely and persistently.

Questions to guide your meditation:

Mary's soul magnifies the Lord in gratitude. Do I express gratitude to God daily? Am I grateful to God for everything He gives me? Good things and bad? Joys and sorrows? (*All things work for the good of those who love God.*) How do I express my gratitude to God? In words alone? Or with my life, i.e. how I live and the choices I make?

Mary rejoices in God. Is my joy rooted in God? Do I seek after temporal joys more than eternal ones? Could I be lacking in true happiness because I also lack in true humility?

- Today's Prayer -

*Lord you are gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
Lord you are good to all
and compassionate toward all your works.*

*Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your Kingdom
and speak of your might.*

Hail Mary, full of grace...