



## BLESSED SACRAMENT LUTHERAN CHURCH

“[Mary is the] highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ . . . She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures.” — Martin Luther, Sermon, Christmas, 1531

Dear Saints,

19 Dec 2021

This Sunday our meditation concentrates on the Magnificat, the Holy Spirit-inspired song of the pregnant Virgin Mary upon salutations from Elizabeth who at that same moment bore St. John the Baptist within her. Protestants, however, can be quite put off by saying anything honorary or venerating about the Blessed Virgin Mary, much less joyfully acknowledging her to be the *Theotokos* — literally, “the God-bearer.” Martin Luther, as the quote above illustrates, would have found such distancing from the Virgin Mary decidedly un-Christian. Note that the quote dates from 1531, some fourteen years after the posting of the 95 Theses. Or consider these words from Luther in 1537, many years after the penning of the Augsburg Confession: “No woman is like you. You are more than Eve or Sarah, blessed above all nobility, wisdom, and sanctity” (Sermon, Feast of the Visitation, 1537). Luther never weaned from such a view of Mary, nor should have he done so.

We shouldn’t think of Luther’s glowing words as vestiges of a yet-to-be-purged Roman Catholicism. Instead, his reflections are on the gift and heritage Jesus’ Mother is to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. It is for this reason, that is, because Mary is so bound up with the pure Gospel itself, indeed, with the pure Gospel *himself* — Jesus, that Gnesio-Lutherans distance themselves from the moniker “Protestant” and have always preferred the designation “Evangelical Catholic.” We are the Gospel Catholics and Mary is integral to the Gospel because without the incarnation of God of a virgin pure, there is no blood atonement for sin by the spotless Lamb of God.

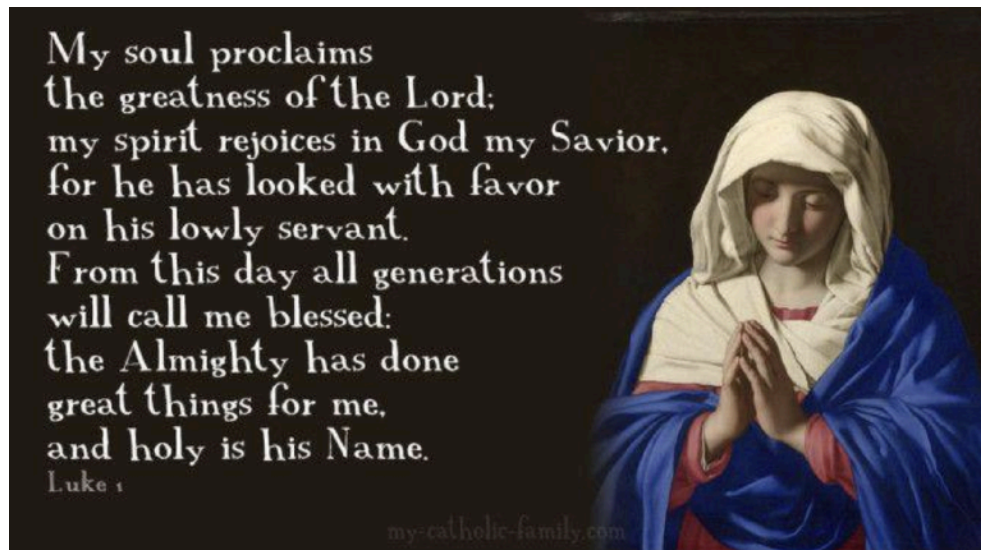
Because the Gospel sets us free, we are at liberty to extol all that is beautiful about Immanuel, “God with us,” especially the means of that cosmos-altering miracle of incarnation, Mary herself. Thus while Luther may shock those embarrassed by the dignity bestowed upon Mary by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, yet Luther and all Evangelical Catholics stand with and in the great catholic tradition to say, “Mary is the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of all of us even though it was Christ alone who reposed on her knees . . . If he is ours, we ought to be in his situation; there where he is, we ought also to be and all that he has ought to be ours, and his mother is also our mother” (Sermon, Christmas, 1529). How’s that? Mary is your mother, too. You are in Christ. And what is Christ’s is yours. His Mother is your Mother in this faith. And who does not speak well of their dear mother? How much more so, when the mother we have in Mary is the most “blessed among women” and “full of grace”? Thus Luther says in another place:

One should honor Mary as she herself wished and as she expressed it in the Magnificat. She praised God for his deeds. How then can we praise her? The true honor of Mary is the honor of God, the praise of God's grace . . . Mary is nothing for the sake of herself, but for the sake of Christ . . . Mary does not wish that we come to her, but through her to God. (Explanation of the Magnificat, 1521)

Now, I bring this up not only because the Magnificat is the Gospel text this Sunday, but also because of the *liberty* and *freedom* we have in Christ to glory in the truth, beauty and goodness of what it means to be a Christian. There is no "anti-Catholic" law or spirit that superstitiously prohibits us from speaking the Virgin Mary's name, displaying her image, singing her song, and (as Luther says) "honoring and praising" her among the Apostles and Prophets about the throne of Christ. Such prohibitions belong to the superstitious and weak-willed.

Our kids, then, should boldly and proudly stand in the heritage of a Church tradition to call Mary "blessed" in this generation and to this generation. For such a confession is the work of the Holy Spirit. The same goes for many other sacred doctrines of the true faith. These include God's use of baptism to save, the bodily presence of Christ in Holy Communion, an efficacious absolution from their priest, and an allegiance to Jesus above all else. All of these things are the work of God . . . just like the virgin conception and virgin birth of Jesus from one more highly favored than all other women, indeed, the archetypal woman of the New Covenant, Mary.

And so our maxim: A theology of embarrassment yields superstitious practice. The theology of the cross, however, begets freedom and confidence, because truth is known of her children.



**Fourth Sunday** 19 Dec. Color: **BLUE**. Divine Service 1. Hymn of Invocation 348. Psalm 80 chanted responsively; Blessing and Lighting of the Advent Wreath; Hymn of the Day 359; Eucharistic Hymn, 358; Recessional 791. Sermon: St. Luke 1:39-56 "The Magnificat."

\* Fourth Midweek Mass: Evening Prayer & DS IV. Office Hymn: LSB 356. I John 4, "A Theology of Gift."

\* Augsburg Academy: The Parable of Luke 15, Lesson 9: "Thematic Similarities to OT Stories."

**Christmas Eve** 24 Dec. 5pm Color: White. Caroling prior to Mass:

Once in Royal David's City	LSB 376
On Christmas Night All Christians Sing	LSB 377
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	LSB 380

Christmas Salutation. Divine Service 1. Processional Hymn: Joy To the World, 387 (bring bells for ringing). Hymn of the Day: Angles We Have Heard on High, 367; Eucharistic Hymns, 370, 393, 374; Recessional Hymn by Candlelight, 363. Sermon: Isaiah 62.10-12 "God's Christmas Promise."

**First Sunday after Christmas** 26 Dec. Color: White. Divine Service 1. Processional Hymn, 379. Hymn of the Day 384; Psalm 111 chanted responsively; Eucharistic Hymn, 365; Recessional 380. Sermon: Luke 2.22-40 "Redeeming the Redeemer."

\* Augsburg Academy: The Parable of Luke 15, Lesson 10: "Points 4-5."

**Second Sunday after Christmas** 2 Jan 2022. Color: White. Divine Service 1. Processional Hymn, 363. Hymn of the Day 366; Psalm 119.97-104 chanted responsively; Eucharistic Hymn, 376; Recessional 387. Sermon: Luke 2.40-52 "In My Father's House."

\* Augsburg Academy: The Parable of Luke 15, Lesson 11: "The Lost Sheep"

Dec. 19	Fourth S. in Advent	Micah 5:2-5a	Psalm 80:1-7	Heb. 10:5-10	Luke 1:39-45 (46-56)
Dec. 24 <i>Eve</i>	The Nativity of Our Lord <i>(Christmas Eve)</i>	Is. 7:10-14	Psalm 110:1-4	1 John 4:7-16	Matt. 1:18-25
Dec. 25 <i>Dawn</i>	The Nativity of Our Lord <i>(Christmas Dawn)</i>	Is. 62:10-12	Psalm 98	Titus 3:4-7	Luke 2:(1-14) 15-20
Dec. 26	First S. a. Christmas	Ex. 13:1-3a, 11-15	Psalm 111	Col. 3:12-17	Luke 2:22-40
Jan. 2	Second S. a. Christmas	1 Kings 3:4-15	Psalm 119: 97-104	Eph. 1:3-14	Luke 2:40-52

\* Confirmation Catechesis, Lesson 4: 6 Jan. Thursday 3:25pm at Classical Christian Academy

\* **Christmas Party @ the Bombaro home, 5pm Saturday 18 Dec.**

\* Order of Saint Vincent training & ICE SKATING event: 21 Dec. Time 12:30 meet at the Sousa home: 915 S. Old Jellum Road, CdA. If snowy, then park at top of road, unless legit 4x4.

\* **Christmas Eve Mass, 5pm.**

\* Meal Tree for the Drake Family (upon the arrival of Baby Drake on 26 Dec @ 11pm). Melinda to send sign up email.

\* Co-Ed(!) Logos & Lager: "The Four Cups of Holy Communion," Saturday 15 January @ 6:30pm, Mike and Julia Pond ranch.