

Holy Eucharist

December 19, 2021

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85887946777?pwd=eig4MEdsMUh6clV6b2dUblFOQ3I2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 858 8794 6777

Passcode: 782611

Advent 4C

Prelude

Announcements

All stand as they are able

Opening Hymn

Hymnal 60

Creator of the stars of night



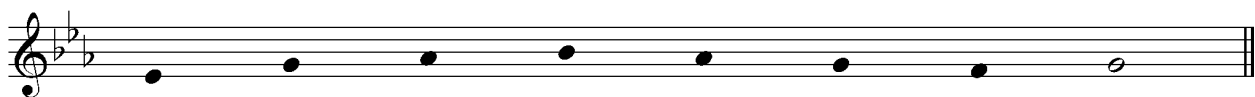
1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night,
2 In sor - row that the an - cient curse
3 When this old world drew on toward night,
* 6 To God the Fa - ther, God the Son,



1 your peo - ple's ev - er - last - ing light,
2 should doom to death a u - ni - verse,
3 you came; but not in splen - dor bright,
6 and God the Spi - rit, Three in One,



1 O Christ, Re - deem - er of us all,
2 you came, O Sa - vior, to set free
3 not as a mon - arch, but the child
6 praise, hon - or, might, and glo - ry be



1 we pray you hear us when we call.
2 your own in glo - rious li - ber - ty.
3 of Ma - ry, blame - less mo - ther mild.
6 from age - to age e - ter - nal - ly.

Presider Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
People **And blessed be God's reign, now and for ever. Amen.**

The Presider begins the Collect for Purity

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: **Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Ky - ri - e e - lei - son." The piano accompaniment provides a harmonic foundation. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "Chris - te e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e e - lei - son." and includes a double bar line at the end.

Collect of the Day

Presider The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**
Presider Let us pray.

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

All sit.

First Reading

Micah 5:2-5a

A Reading from the book of the prophet Micah.

²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,

from you shall come forth for me
 one who is to rule in Israel,
 whose origin is from of old,
 from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
 when she who is in labor has brought forth;
 then the rest of his kindred shall return
 to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
 And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
 to the ends of the earth;

^{5a}and he shall be the one of peace.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Remain seated

Canticle 15: Magnificat
Tell out, my soul

Hymnal 438



1 Tell out, my soul, the great-ness of the Lord!
 2 Tell out, my soul, the great-ness of his Name!
 3 Tell out, my soul, the great-ness of his might!
 4 Tell out, my soul, the glo-ries of his word!



Un - num - bered bless - ings give my spi - rit voice;
 Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
 Powers and do - min - ions lay their glo - ry by.
 Firm is his prom - ise, and his mer - cy sure.



ten - der to me the prom - ise of his word;
 his mer - cy sure, from age to age the same;
 Proud hearts and stub - born wills are put to flight,
 Tell out, my soul, the great-ness of the Lord



in God my Sa - vior shall my heart re - jice.
 his ho - ly Name— the Lord, the Might - y One.
 the hun - gry fed, the hum - ble lift - ed high.
 to chil - dren's chil - dren and for ev - er - more!

Second Reading

Hebrews 10:5-10

A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

⁵When Christ came into the world, he said,
 “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
 but a body you have prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
 you have taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’
 (in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

⁸When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

All stand as they are able.

Sequence Hymn

Hymnal 56

O come, O come, Emmanuel



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som
 7 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind in one the
 8 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som



1 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile
 7 hearts of all man - kind; bid thou our sad di - vi - sions
 8 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile

1 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re - joice! Re - joice!
 7 cease, and be thy - self our King of Peace.
 8 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
 Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

Holy Gospel

Luke 1:39-55

Gospeller The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Luke.
People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country,
⁴⁰where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”



⁴⁶And Mary said,
 “My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
 Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
 and holy is his name.
⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
 from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
 he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
 and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
 and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
 in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

Gospeller The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Sermon

Nicene Creed

All stand as they are able.

Presider Let us affirm the faith of the Church using the words of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God,

**the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

**the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

**who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

All remain standing as they are able.

Presider: The Mighty One has done great things for us. And so we appeal to God once again, praying, “Stir up your strength, O Lord; and come to help us.”

Intercessor Restore us, O God of hosts, and renew your Church in love. Bless our Bishops Bonnie, Michael, Justin, Moises, Elizabeth, Donald and Craig. Bless all ministers, priests, deacons, ministry teams, those in formation; and our brothers and sisters worshipping at Emmaus, Walled Lake/Novi, and Church of the Annunciation, Santiago, in the Dominican Republic. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Silence is kept.

Show the strength of your arm, O God: lift up the lowly. Fill the hungry with good things. Look on your children with favor. Prepare in us a mansion for yourself, O Christ. May we know security. May we know peace. May we know the benefits of the reign of your Christ. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Silence is kept.

Have mercy on all captives and prisoners, O God. Remember them and come to their aid. Fill our hearts with mercy. May we learn to forgive even as you forgive us. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Silence is kept.

O God, you lead us with joy; you delight in our joy. We give you thanks for [_____] and for all your boundless blessings.

Hear the prayers of your people, O God of hosts. We pray for the sick and the troubled [especially _____]. May those who have fed on the bread of tears, feed instead on your strength, O Lord. Show them the light of your countenance and be their salvation.

Great Shepherd, gather your flock into your eternal kingdom. Bless the dying, embrace the dead [especially _____], and comfort those who mourn. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Silence is kept.

Presider: O God, the strength of all who put their trust in you: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because in our weakness we can do nothing good without you, give us the help of your grace, that in keeping your commandments we may please you both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

A Minister says

Let us confess our sins to God.

Silence is kept.

Minister and People

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

A Priest stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, + forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

Peace

All stand as they are able.

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People **And also with you.**

Then the Ministers and the People may greet one another in the name of the Lord.

The People then are seated.

Holy Communion

The Presider then says

Let us with gladness present the offerings and oblations of our life and labor to the Lord.

How the Holy Communion is prepared

The Presider, other Eucharistic Ministers, and any participating Acolytes must wash their hands, or use hand sanitizer, before celebrating and before distribution. Gloves will not be used.

All of the elements for Holy Communion will be placed on the Altar for the Eucharistic Prayer. The Presider alone stands at the altar, with others 6 feet or more away.

The **priest's wafer and chalice** will be uncovered in front of the Presider during the Eucharistic Prayer. They **are for the Presider alone**. They are consumed entirely by the Presider, or appropriately disposed of after the service.

The priest's wafer and the people's wafers will be kept separate at all times. The **people's wafers will be a container** on the Altar, which will remain covered throughout the Eucharistic Prayer.

During consecration, the Presider will touch the container, not the wafers.

The **distribution** of consecrated wine is not permitted at this time (as of June 19, 2020 Diocese of Michigan directive).

How the Holy Communion will be distributed

Everyone distributing communion will use hand sanitizer before they begin distribution. Gloves will not be used.

Communicants will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer before receiving. Hand sanitizer will be available at the service.

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The people will come to the Altar rail as they are able. The Minister will place the bread in the hand. The distribution will happen without directly touching the hand of the person receiving. Hand-to-mouth distribution is not permitted. If hand-to-hand contact happens, the minister will re-sanitize.

If a blessing is preferred, the blessing will be given without touch.

The people stand as they are able as a minister brings forward the alms basin.

Offertory Hymn

Doxology

**Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

The people remain standing.

Great Thanksgiving

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Presider Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Presider Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is a good and joyful thing to give our thanks to you. Lord God of hosts, O ancient of days, for from of old you have called forth life.

You brought into being every detail of creation and gave birth to your covenant people.

When the time drew near, you called upon Bethlehem to bear the hope you promised, and summoned Mary to bear your holy child.

By your grace the child grew to be the one to bear not only our sins but the sins of the world.

In his dying and rising you gave birth to everlasting life for all your children. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we sing your praise and join the unending hymn.

Sanctus

Hymnal S-129



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and

might, hea - ven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

The people continue to stand, or kneel, as they are able.

The Presider continues

God of Mary, whose womb bore the sacred fruit of our salvation, bring forth from this fruit of the vine your cup of blessing.

As we remember around this table your Son’s saving passion poured out for us, send your Holy Spirit † upon your church to make us bearers of your Christ, your mercy, and your hope.

Sanctify this bread and cup, that they may be for us the body and blood of Jesus our Lord; who, at supper with his disciples, took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to his friends, and said, “Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

After supper, he took the cup of wine, gave thanks, and said, “Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.”

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

The Presider continues

God of holy expectation, let your face shine upon us, and your dawn break upon us, that we may be saved.

Make your church expectant in faith as we labor for what we cannot yet see. Come and dwell with your people who yearn to be restored, to be forgiven, to belong.

Let the warmth of your face shine upon those who seek the peace long promised for Bethlehem, for Jerusalem, and for all your waiting world.

Bring us, with the saints who have looked for your coming, to the day when we and all your children shall celebrate and leap for joy in your holy presence, one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



The Presider then continues

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.
Breaking of the Bread**

A period of silence is kept.

The Presider says

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

These are the Gifts of God.

And we are the people of God.

And in union and solidarity with your faithful people
who are not able to be present at this table, we pray together:

**Strengthen and sustain us with your grace, Lord Christ,
and let us never be separated from you.**

Come spiritually into all of our hearts, Lord Christ.

**May we live in you, and you in us, in this life, and in the life to come.
Amen.**

All baptized persons are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

After Communion, the Presider says

Let us pray.

Presider and People

**Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Blessing

A priest blesses the people, saying

God of hope, when Christ your Son appears may he not find us asleep or idle,
but active in his service.

And may the blessing of the Holy One who made you,
†Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer be with you today and always. **Amen.**

Concluding Hymn

Come, thou long-expected Jesus

Hymnal 66

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo - ple free;
 2 Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art:
 3 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king,
 4 By thine own e - ter - nal Spi - rit rule in all our hearts a - lone;

from our fears and sins re - lease us, let us find our rest in thee.
 dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
 born to reign in us for ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.
 by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

Dismissal

Minister My sisters and my brothers, let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

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Faith in Action continues to provide leadership in collecting donations to support households in need in the Chelsea and Dexter areas. They are in need of our continuing help. You may bring your donations to FIA, or to Nancy who will see that they get there. **If you bring food directly to FIA**, please let Nancy know, so she can continue to keep our records of donation. If you write a check, please make it to *Faith In Action*. **The next Food Drive at the church is TODAY, December 19.** Please contribute as generously as you can.

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Compline will be prayed together on Zoom on December 22 at 7:00 p.m. Use this link, or the phone-in information to join your siblings in Christ in this quiet and brief service:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86179980160?pwd=YVhPR2FWMDhsOEpsUkhBZ3RuYXV1Zz09> Meeting ID: 861 7998 0160 Passcode: 046006

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Thank you to St Barnabas Church and all who donated to our Faith in Action family. We collected for gifts and gift cards \$1,110 not including the Thompson’s gift card for the family!

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A message from our Quilters Guild “Thanks to all the people at St B and the community who supported the quilt guild fund raiser this past Saturday, December 4th. Even though we had a low turnout this year (and it was a very tough year for many people) we raised \$421.50. That is truly wonderful. A real special thank-you to Sage Merkel, Kathy West, and Elaine Moffett who contributed their beautiful yarn crafts to our sale. And we don’t have all the names of the people that contributed to the bake sale but thank you, thank you, thank you. The CAADY QUILTERS at the Chelsea Senior Center provided many beautiful quilts that went into our show. We really appreciate their support. Congratulations to Elaine Moffett (Scott’s mom), who won the quilt raffle. We really had a good time displaying our work and crafts and enjoyed our day. God Bless you all during this Advent Season and the coming of Christmas.”

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A reminder that our Social Time is active every Tuesday evening from 7:00-7:30 on Zoom! The link can be found on the church web site calendar, and also here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86367804283?pwd=eW9jelFKTTdaaUlXR0ZxMEc1NlM3Zz09> Meeting ID: 863 6780 4283, Passcode: 894503

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Upcoming Commemorations

- December 19 Lillian Trasher: Missionary in Egypt, 1961
- 20 Katharina von Bora, Church Reformer, 1552
- 21 Thomas the Apostle
- 22 Henry Budd: Priest, 1875; and,
Charlotte Digges Moon: Missionary in China, 1912
- 25 **The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ: Christmas Day**

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Micah 5:2-5a; Canticle 15; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-55

During Advent and Christmas, we will be using study prompts and other activities tied to the sermon for the week. Read the sermon aloud and follow-up with spoken responses to the two questions at the end. Find our full sermon compilation for individual, small group, or congregational use, *Sermons for Advent and Christmas 2021* at www.sermonsthatwork.org.

The Hope-Song by the Rev. Phil Hooper

The Rev. Pauli Murray once wrote that “hope is a song in a weary throat,” and amid this hopeful season, amid this weary age, we would do well to consider what such a song sounds like. It’s easy to miss sometimes, the hope-song, because it doesn’t always sound the way we might expect. We are too easily distracted by the proud aria or the ironic riff to listen for the soft, tremulous music that hope makes.

Hope is the song of empty karaoke bars, of late nights and of last dances, of a husky voice crying out a melody to defy the encroaching night. It is the song one sings under the breath, an insistent memory, perhaps, or a reassurance on the lonely walk home. It is the warbling note that has no obvious splendor other than its defiant insistence to be heard. The hope-song is not elegant, but it is faithful. It is honest. It is the song one offers up when the song is all that’s left to offer.

Consider this music, then, as we travel with Mary to Elizabeth’s house. Forget for a moment the lush choral arrangements of the *Magnificat*. Don’t be fooled by the prophetic boldness of the words alone. Remember that there is a fearful precariousness to her position. She is a young woman walking uphill in every sense of the word, seeking the comfort of a familiar face when everything else has suddenly become so very unfamiliar. We might wonder: did Mary sing to herself on the dusty road to the hill country? Was it a song that her own parents once taught her that she practiced on parched lips? Or did she call it up from somewhere deeper within, from the Spirit-infused cells of her very depths, determined to give voice to what was true, even when her life seemed to be caught in uncertainty?

Regardless, she sings, and it is indeed hope in a weary throat, reverberating into eternity: “My soul magnifies the Lord.”

Like any hope-song, there is defiance here, along with the joy and the fear. Yes, Mary says, yes, *my* soul, *my* very self magnifies the inexpressible holy name of God. The soul that belongs to this body in all its frailty and in all its fecundity—this is a place where God is revealed. Obscure, vulnerable, enmeshed in the tragic history of my people—I may be all of those things, but God is disclosed in them, not despite them, and God has chosen to take part in this world through me.

And so, I will sing!

I will sing though I am weary, though I am frightened, because in the singing I place myself within a story, not just a circumstance. I sing a song of victory, not of victimhood.

I am a teller of hard truths and I am the bearer of hard hope, the type that survives—it is my people's hope, and my own.

Do we sing a new reality into being, or do we sing to pierce the veil of delusions, to uncover what is already true? The Kingdom is already, and it is not yet, but either way, Mary knows what must be sung, both because she carries the King within her womb, and because she is herself the Queen—a wisdom-figure, worthy in her own deep humanity, as each of us is, to discover and proclaim the hidden, unfolding power of God. Her song belongs to her ancestors, and it belongs to the child she will nurture. It belongs to all of us. It is ancient, and it is new. It is forever.

And thanks be to God for that, because we need hope-songs now, just as desperately as Mary did then. We need to be reminded of the dream that is encased in the tender core of humanity—the dream that God has placed therein, the dream that God invites us to bear into the world, the dream which refuses to be dispelled even by centuries of disappointment and degradation.

And it is especially important for us to remember, in the cacophonous holiday season, that the song that tells of this dream is not always the loudest or the most popular. It is, instead, the one borne of deep, soul-stirring wisdom. The one that, when you hear it—even when the throat is dry and the voice is garbled by tears—still the melody is recognizable because we have been singing it forever.

God's mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

But what do we do with this song of Mary's? How do we make it truly our own in a new and urgent time? Do we put it on a t-shirt or a bumper sticker? Do we write a few more books about it? Host a conference to assess the meaning of the words? Arrange it into a new musical setting?

We could. We do. We protect ourselves, sometimes, by turning Mary's song into an ornament when, in truth, it demands everything we have.

Because that's the thing about the hope-song: you don't really know it, you can't really claim it, until you yourself have sung it with a weary throat. You can't grasp the words until life has grasped at you, until you have been forced to walk up a few hills of your own, whether by choice or chance. And so, if we really want to sing the song, if we really want to mean it, we must first ask ourselves how attuned we are to the precariousness of our lives and those of our neighbors. We must examine how vulnerable we are, and how open we have been to the risk of Jesus' invitation to follow him, on the path first trod by his mother.

And in our self-examination, we might find that we have indeed been brought down low by life, that we are hungry for good things, and that this song of hope will lift us up if we have the courage to trust in its promise and lend our voices to its chorus. For the weary among us, the challenge is to show the world that we are more than our present despair.

Or it may be, for many of us, that we find ourselves to be the ones already in high, comfortable places, the ones who have never relied so much on hope as we have referred to it, because we are ensconced in other, richer melodies—the ones that lull rather than

vivify. If so, it is time for us to wake up. It is time for us to come back down to earth and stand on holy ground. Because it is only from there, where Christ abides, that we can truly begin to live in the way God dreams we might.

Either way, Mary’s voice is calling out to you. So, whoever you are, wherever you find yourself, follow the sound of the hope-song. Let it guide you into the place of encounter with your most unencumbered self, and into relationship with the Holy One who calls you onward.

Mary has shown us the way, she has shown us the words, and she has shown us that while hope may be well-acquainted with weariness, it points beyond it, too, toward the place and time when a new song will be born—one of hope fulfilled, of rejoicing, and of rest. We are still learning how to sing that new song, but it is coming. And it is now here.

1. Write out the Magnificat in your own handwriting. You can find versions in both the Book of Common Prayer (p.65 or p.119) and in the Bible (Luke 1:46-55).

2. What do you think the Rev. Pauli Murray meant when she wrote, “Hope is a song in a weary throat”? Learn more about the story of this Episcopal saint and her joy. Where do you see similarities between her life and Mary’s song?

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Reflection on our Opening Hymn

“Stars help me to put things in perspective. When life seems confusing, stepping outdoors and looking up on a clear night renews my lucidity: the trivialities that oppress me evaporate. Since the big bang of Genesis, the stars have always been there, dazzling the eye and assuring us that the universe is both more vast and more beautiful than we believe it to be in our darker moments.

I can hear the stars in Haydn's oratorio *The Creation*. A tenor sings these words: And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night, and to give light upon the earth; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years. He made the stars also.

Then a single violin spins out a note, pianissimo, and one by one other instruments join it, until there is a blaze of sound. Perhaps Haydn intended in this passage to portray the sun rising at daybreak, but I hear it also as the dark sky being filled by the blazing stars.

I can see them in Van Gogh's *The Starry Night*, where the swirling stars shed light on the dark cypresses and shadowy roofs of a village. Van Gogh's stars are not just decorative; they are a presence.

Their presence in the night sky puts me in my place. I realize how very small a space my body occupies in universe. Yet this realization is not disempowering; rather, it helps me glimpse the eternal truths that lie beyond immediate concerns which usually occupy me.

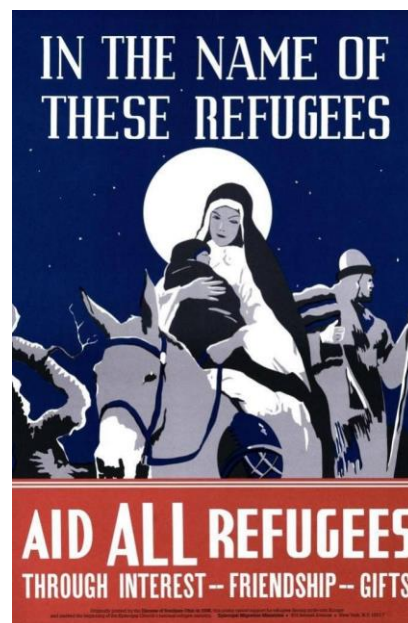
The stars help me to understand time differently. What I am seeing—because light from that distance takes so long to reach the earth—is time past: stars as they existed millions of years ago. Stars help me to relax a little about my own place in history.

For believers, the night sky is a reminder of the presence of God. The stars hovering over Nazareth and Bethlehem were the same stars flung across the sky from God's hand at the beginning of time. When "this old world drew on toward night" and the winged Gabriel swooped from heaven to greet the maiden of Nazareth, he brought the news that the Creator's presence would continue to shine over humanity, like the stars shining since creation. The Creator who dwells in the stars and in the child of Bethlehem dwells in us as well, and we are redeemed for eternal day.”

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Eucharistic prayer from Wells, Samuel and Abigail Kocher. *Eucharistic prayers*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2016, pp.58-59.
Amen by Marty Haugen, *Mass of Creation*. Copyright © 2010 GIA Publications.
Reflection on *Creator of the stars of night* from Roth, Nancy, *Awake my soul: meditating on hymns*. Vol.B. New York: Church Publishing, 1999, pp.20-21.

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