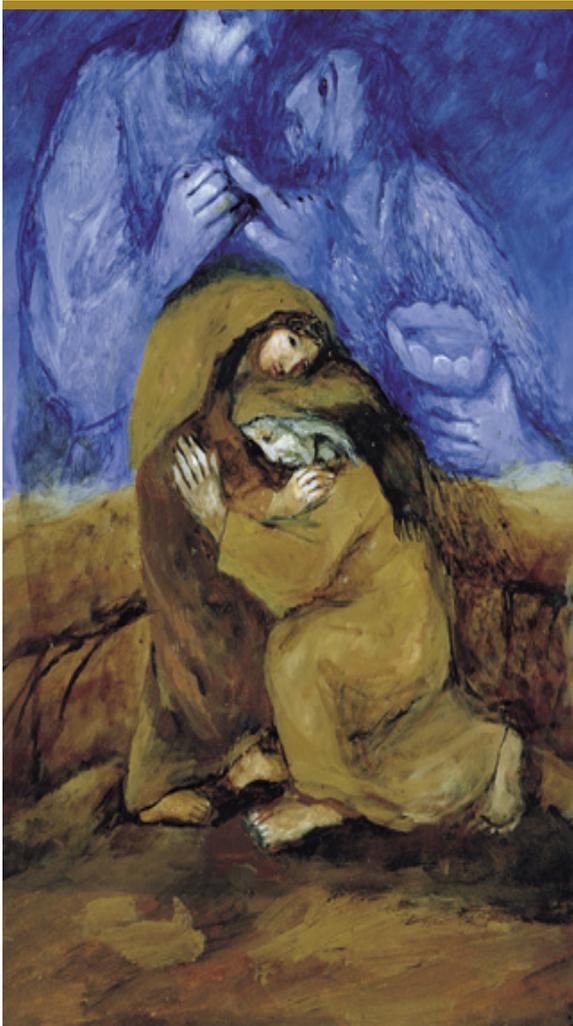


8. Living Mercy: Mary



GATHERING SPACE

Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness. In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak, but of the strong, who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves. (Pope Francis)

Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for God has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

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

God has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

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...” (Luke 1)

- > Pope Francis asserts that a Church of Mercy must have a ‘Marian style’. What would this Church look and feel like?

FROM POPE FRANCIS: THE CHURCH OF MERCY

Three words sum up Mary’s attitude: listening, decision, action. They are words that point out a way ... (the following is a summary of the ‘Marian style’ which Pope Francis urges the Church and all people to adopt. They are a way to mercy).

Mary was attentive to God – she listened to both the words and events of her time.

Mary was humane, practical and a realist. She made decisions, after careful reflection, and then acted.

Mary gave human flesh to God’s love. “What took place most singularly in the Virgin Mary also takes place within us, spiritually, when we receive the word of God with a good

and sincere heart. It is as if God takes flesh within us...?”

Mary’s faith journey is a model for all Christians, to follow Jesus in humility, mercy, closeness to others and rejecting hypocrisy, duplicity and idolatry.

Mary is a constant point of reference for the Church– she let herself be guided by the Holy Spirit towards service and fruitfulness.

Mary was countercultural – she praised God for ‘bringing down the mighty from their thrones’ and ‘sending the rich away empty’.

Mary was of service to others.

Mary was revolutionary – she lived love and tenderness.

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- > What aspects of the ‘Marian style’ affirm your ideas of mercy?
- > How could these principles be applied to Church ministries and the world more broadly?

PRAYER

God of love and tenderness

Be with us as we meet as a board this evening.

May we be open, like Mary, to your call to attentiveness, justice and hope – in word and action.

We pray that your word will take flesh within each of us so that we may help birth a new world of compassion and mercy.

For a world in which human freedom is more important than borders and security

Mary of Mercy, hear our prayer

For a Church in which all are welcome and diversity and equity are celebrated

Mary of Mercy, hear our prayer

For a society which champions altruism and generosity rather than competition and materialism

Mary of Mercy, hear our prayer

For our Board, that we may strive to work in a ‘Marian style’ honouring relationships and the needs of all in the community

Mary of Mercy, hear our prayer

For ourselves that we embrace the call to honour the God in others

Mary of Mercy, hear our prayer

Give us courage, in this Year of Mercy, to open the doors of our hearts to the power of a merciful way of living and being

Mary of Mercy, hear our prayer

(Pause for any special intentions)

FOR THE END OF THE MEETING

Mary’s Magnificat proclaims the reversal of values in a world where the strongest survive and the poor are trampled upon. An individual woman exults in the power of God, shining through her human weakness. Jesus declares his solidarity with humanity, each one of us, through him, a beloved daughter or son in whom God is well pleased.

Each human encounter can become an Annunciation, a Visitation.

‘The God in me greets the God in you’, goes the Easter greeting.

How often do we meet another and honour God in that person?

If we really believed and acted on this, our world would be transformed. (Simmonds)

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” (Luke 1)

Illustration from Sieger Köder ‘Art and Inspiration’. Simmonds, G: *The Closeness of God* (2013), p28. Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. Pope Francis: *The Church of Mercy* (2014), pp145-159.

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



© 2016 Mercy Partners. All rights reserved.