

Magnificat by Antonio Vivaldi

Presented by The St. Thomas Parish Choir and Soloists
Sunday, December 17 at the 10:30 am Service

In my preparation for this special musical offering, the song *Let It Be* by Paul McCartney has often popped into my head. I have been thinking a lot about the significance of Mary, and all mothers, in our lives and in the Christian story. McCartney said he had the idea for *Let It Be* after he had a dream about his mother. According to McCartney, the song's reference to "Mother Mary" was not biblical. McCartney explained that his mother, who died of cancer when he was fourteen, was the inspiration for the lyrics. He said that in the dream his mother told him, "It will be all right, just let it be." In these tempestuous times, I find that these words are especially appropriate and comforting. When asked if the song referred to the Virgin Mary, McCartney has typically answered the question by assuring his fans that they can interpret the song any way they like.

*When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me.
Speaking words of wisdom, Let it be*

*And in my hour of darkness, She is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom, Let it be*

*And when the broken-hearted people, Living in the world agree
There will be an answer, Let it be*

*For though they may be parted there is, Still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer, Let it be*

*And when the night is cloudy, There is still a light that shines on me
Shine until tomorrow, Let it be*

*I wake up to the sound of music, Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom, Let it be*

On Sunday, December 17, the St. Thomas parish choir and soloists will be presenting Mary's stirring words of wisdom known as the Magnificat. This is Mary's response to hearing the news that she will bear a child named Emmanuel (God with us).

*My soul doth magnify the Lord.
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden: For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations.
He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel:
As he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.*

These ancient words also have the power to give us comfort, joy and hope as we prepare for the birth of Christ in the sinful and broken world in which we live. The Magnificat (Latin: My soul magnifies the Lord) is a canticle, also known as the Song of Mary, the Canticle of Mary, and, in the Byzantine tradition, the Ode of the Theotokos. This canticle is most often sung or recited during the evening prayer service: Vespers in the Catholic and Lutheran church and Evensong in the Anglican church. It is one of the eight most ancient Christian hymns and perhaps the earliest Marian hymn. This text is also traditionally included in the Sunday lectionary during the Advent season.

The text of the canticle is taken directly from the Gospel of Luke (1:46–55) where it is spoken by Mary upon her visitation to her cousin Elizabeth. In the narrative, after Mary greets Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist, Elizabeth praises Mary for her faith and Mary responds with the Magnificat. Mary's Magnificat, recorded only in Luke's Gospel, is one of four hymns, which complement the promise-fulfillment theme of Luke's infancy

narrative. These Canticles are Mary's Magnificat; Zechariah's Benedictus (1:67–79); the angels' Gloria in Excelsis Deo (2:13–14); and Simeon's Nunc dimittis (2:28–32).

When life becomes over whelming and all hope seems lost, remember that Mother Mary still comes to us speaking words of wisdom: My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, it WILL be all right, just let it be.

As we prepare a place in our hearts for Christ to dwell, I hope you will join us in experiencing Vivaldi's musical interpretation of Mary's joyful song of gratitude as she prepares to give birth to the Savior of the world.

*Christ, He requires still, wheresoe'er He comes
To feed, or lodge, to have the best of rooms:
Give Him the choice; grant Him the nobler part
Of all the house: the best of all's the heart.*

Robert Herrick,
17th Century English Poet

In Christ's Love,
Ryan

We will need to raise additional funds to cover the cost of these special services. If you are interested in making a donation to our Music Ministry fund please contact Kathleen Stephens in the church office or write "Music Ministry" in memo of check.