



## Mary, Did You Know? December 14, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

Our 2021 bi-monthly resources have been sent the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month; you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page – [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these twice-monthly resources will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs. This resource is an Advent reflection on Mary's prophetic voice, which continues to call all Christians – both Catholic and Protestant – to peace and justice today.

Here are a few things to have handy for your meeting. If you are facilitating this resource among a group, let participants know to bring the following items ahead of time:

- A Bible, preferably one you're okay with marking up. Alternatively, participants can print out Luke 1:46-56 ahead of time.
- A pen or pencil
- A journal or blank piece of paper
- Optional: A hot beverage of your choice

Last but not least, all of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#) Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff

## Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

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In the spirit of Mary's welcoming of God's child, be particularly mindful of hospitality as you plan your gathering. Welcome participants warmly as they join your meeting; or, if you are engaging in the resource by yourself, take a moment before you begin to intentionally receive God's welcome. Maybe consider making a hot beverage for everyone, or, if you're meeting virtually, invite participants to bring their own. ([Here's a link](#) to one of my – Kristin's – personal favorites: Mexican hot chocolate!)

If you're meeting with a group, begin with these words:

**Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you! Today we'll begin with prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around a short Advent reflection before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.**

**Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.**

*Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer.*

If you are videoconferencing, [share your screen](#), so that everyone can see the prayer.

Reader 1: Deep peace of the running wave to you,  
of water flowing, rising and falling,  
sometimes advancing, sometimes receding ...  
May the stream of your life flow unimpeded!  
Deep peace of the running wave to you!

Reader 2: Deep peace of the flowing air to you,  
which fans your face on a sultry day,  
the air which you breathe deeply, rhythmically,  
which imparts to you energy, consciousness, life.  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you!

Reader 1: Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,  
who, herself unmoving, harbours the movements  
and facilitates the life of the ten thousand creatures,  
while resting contented, stable, tranquil.  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you!

Reader 2: Deep peace of the shining stars to you,

which stay invisible till darkness falls  
and discloses their pure and shining presence  
beaming down in compassion on our turning world.  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you!

Reader 1: Deep peace of the watching shepherds to you,  
of unpretentious folk who, watching and waiting,  
spend long hours out on the hillside,  
expecting in simplicity some Coming of the Lord.  
Deep peace of the watching shepherds to you!

Reader 2: Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you,  
who, swift as the wave and pervasive as the air,  
quiet as the earth and shining like a star,  
breathes into us His Peace and His Spirit.  
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you!

Mary Rogers, Adapted from the Gaelic  
From *Earth Prayers* by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon  
HarperOne, p. 172-173

## Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

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Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

*Note: If you're with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.*

- What is something fun or meaningful you've been doing to prepare for Christmas?
- Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling? (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- Advent is a time of both darkness and light. Where have you encountered darkness this week? Where have you encountered light and joy this week?

## Reflection (30 minutes or so)

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Begin the reflection with this introduction:

During the Advent season of 2018, a Twitter post humorously critiqued the song “Mary Did You Know?” The post read: “Mary freaking knew, that her baby boy would one day rule the nations. Mary freaking knew, that her baby boy was Lord of all creation. Yes, she knew! Read Luke 1 you fool!”

The post was of course meant to be humorous, but after a thorough reading of Mary’s prophetic and poetic words in Luke 1, it’s clear that the author has a point! After all, when Mary, who is unwed, pregnant, and unaccompanied, makes the dangerous journey to visit Elizabeth, she proclaims *exactly* what she knew about her son and what he came to do. Today we’ll read Mary’s song, also known as the Magnificat, to explore what exactly Mary knew and how her insight is both radical and relevant even today.

### **A Meditative reading of the Magnificat**

Invite a volunteer to read Luke 1:46-56. Ask participants to read along in their own Bibles; or, if you are meeting virtually, share your screen so that participants can read the text below (the text is from the CEB version, but you can use whichever translation you prefer).

Mary said,

With all my heart I glorify the Lord!  
In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.  
He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.  
Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored  
Holy is his name.  
He shows mercy to everyone,  
from one generation to the next,  
who honors him as God.  
He has shown strength with his arm.  
He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.  
He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones  
and lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things  
and sent the rich away empty-handed.  
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,  
remembering his mercy,  
just as he promised to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”

Invite participants to pause for a moment of silent reflection. *Pause for about 30 seconds.*

Then say:

We'll now read the Magnificat again. This time, underline what God has done through the sending of Jesus.

Invite a volunteer to read the Magnificat a second time.

### Reflection on the Magnificat

*Note: There are a lot of reflection questions here, and it's okay to move through them relatively quickly. To maximize your time, consider breaking participants into pairs or groups of two or three.*

- **What *did* Mary know about who Jesus would be and what he was coming to accomplish?** (Invite participants to read aloud the phrases they have underlined, such as “pulled the powerful down from their thrones” and “filled the hungry with good things”)
- How might Mary’s song challenge your understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish, both in the first century and in the 21st century?
- **Note that Mary calls herself *blessed*.** This word is often associated with comfort and ease, but Mary’s blessedness comes from taking part in God’s plan. “Blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God,” Jesus later says. How does Mary teach us what *blessedness* really means?
- **Note that the Magnificat describes the leveling of hierarchies.** Throughout Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is constantly proclaiming equity. “He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones and lifted up the lowly.” For Luke, there is little distinction between spiritual freedom and socio-economic freedom: The Word Made Flesh doesn’t just give the hungry *spiritual* food: he gives them *real* bread as well. Also, at first glance, it might seem as though the rich and powerful are punished. But perhaps the oppressors are held captive by their riches just as much as the poor are held captive by poverty.<sup>1</sup>
  - *Give participants a minute to think about this. Ask if anyone needs to read this paragraph again.*
  - *Then ask: how does the paragraph I just read speak to your life or resonate with what’s going on in our world today?*

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<sup>1</sup> Ernesto Cardenal records a conversation in his book *El Evangelio en Solentiname* (translated by me, Kristin): “[Mary’s song is] a song of the poor. The people of Nicaragua had been a fan of reciting it, it’s a favorite prayer of the poor and often the more superstitious peasants wear it as an amulet. When in olden times Somoza demanded that the peasants always have with them proof that they had voted for him, the people humoristically called this document the ‘Magnificat’” (Editorial Trotta, 2006).

- **Note that Mary is the one speaking** – Women didn't have a very loud voice in the first century. The fact that Mary's perspective is recorded is a huge statement about who is considered important to God. Not only does Mary demonstrate prophetic wisdom, but she is also the one whom the angel visits to inform her of both her own and Elizabeth's pregnancies. A lengthy conversation is recorded between two *women* – Elizabeth and Mary, which shows that women have an equal place in the Kingdom of God.
  - *Give participants a minute to think about this. Ask if anyone needs to read this paragraph again.*
  - *Then ask: Who do you look to for wisdom? Do you seek the guidance of the "Marys" of this world?*

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## Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

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### Discernment through Journaling

Ask participants to take out their journal and/or blank piece of paper. Then invite participants to silently journal their thoughts around the following question:

**This Advent season, how can you participate in Mary's vision of who Jesus is and what he came to do?**

Pause for 2-3 minutes as participants journal.

Break the silence with this prayer:

**We thank you, O God, that you show us your mercy through the birth of your Son. May your Kingdom come, that the lowly may be lifted up, and the hungry may be filled with good things. Guide us in living out your dream for this world, as told by your servant Mary.**

### Advent Statement of Faith

*If you are meeting in person: read the Advent Statement of Faith in unison.*

*If you are meeting virtually: have everyone except Readers 1 and 2 mute themselves, but read aloud in unison even though you will be muted (video-conferencing does not do well with unison voices, but this prayer is meant to be read as a community).*

Reader 1: We believe in the Holy Word,  
who is God,  
and who was with God since the beginning,  
breathing life into dust,  
shining invincible light into the darkness.

Reader 2: We believe in the Word made flesh  
who dwelled among us,  
a fragile baby in need of love—  
but who is Love in its fullest form.

Reader 1: We believe in the Word with us,  
now and until the end of the age,  
creating even still,  
bringing life to dead and lonely places.

Reader 2: We believe in the Living Word  
who draws us together —  
wealthy kings, a teenage girl, poor shepherds,  
those of all languages, cultures, and nations —  
through his body.

Reader 1: Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to all of God's people  
in heaven and on earth.

Amen.

In these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

**We are disciples on a journey.**

**We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.**

**We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.**

**If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.**

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.