

## **St. Mary, Mother of Our Lord**

(August 15)

And Mary said:

*“My soul glorifies the Lord  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
holy is his name.” (Luke 1:46-49)*

## **Sing Along with Mary**

For several moments at the stoplight, I watched the person in the other car. She was singing along, her head swaying, her hands keeping beat with the tune on the car radio. In fact, she had it turned up so loudly that I could have joined in.

When’s the last time we sang along with someone? Hopefully, we’d want to join Mary as she sings her joyful hymn.

### **Because of her Savior**

Mary was in the house of her relative Elizabeth, having hurried there to share some good news. But before she could even begin, Elizabeth told her all about it, how Mary was blessed among women because of having been chosen to give birth to the promised Savior. What wonderful strengthening for Mary’s faith this must have been, to have Elizabeth tell her the same news that the angel Gabriel had. Now Mary’s heart overflowed with grateful faith and fervent joy. Because her heart was full, her lips sang.

“My soul glorifies the Lord,” she sang. Mary was not concerned about praise for herself. There was no pride

flooding her heart because of what she was going to do. Praise was in order, very much so, and it could go in only one direction, to the Lord. Miraculously pregnant with the Son of God, she could only marvel at the “Mighty One” who was doing “such great things” for her.

What were the “great things” the mighty God was doing for her? Mary points them out clearly. “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior,” she sings. “God,” she calls him, using a term that means the “God of might,” the “all-powerful God.” “Savior,” she also calls him, identifying him as the one who used his great power to accomplish something that was great beyond measure, the salvation of sinners. But above all, she uses that little word, “my.” That blessed baby in her womb was her Savior. She was singing with joy because her almighty God was giving her what she needed most—a Savior from her sins. As one church father wrote, “Mary was more blessed in that she believed in Christ, than in that she had given him birth.”

Rose was her name. She had had an illustrious career, one that had taken her to many countries. But she was an unbeliever until in her early 80s. Barely two years after her adult baptism, she was struck down with a vicious, quick-spreading malignancy. At my last visit to her hospital bed, she asked me to close the door and then confessed some details of her past life. When she was all done, somehow the Spirit gave me the right words. “Rose,” I said, “where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Romans 5:20). Those were the last words I ever spoke to her. As I left that hospital room, I heard her repeating softly with joy, “Grace increased all the more.” Sing along with Mary because of the gift of her Savior? Rose did!

And us? God has done so many great things for us. From the hearts that beat regularly inside our chests to the loved ones who stand faithfully at our sides, from the daily food on our tables to the daily opportunities in our lives, God does so much for us. Do we take such great gifts for granted? Of course, we have to admit rather shamefacedly. We even take his greatest gift of all for granted. “He’s my Savior,” we say too, but do we say it often enough? And when we do, is it with the same kind of zeal that Mary put forth in her song? Is it with that amazed awe, that mouth-wide-open kind of marveling at what a great thing it is God has done for us? We can never sing along with Mary too often because of God’s greatest gift, our Savior.

### **Because of his favor**

“Why?” Mary must have asked a number of times during the months of her pregnancy, “Why did God pick me to give birth to the Savior?” In her song she gives the answer. It was because a gracious God was “mindful of the humble state of his servant.” Mary also was mindful of her “humble state,” of how in God’s eyes she was nothing but a sinner and deserved nothing from him but punishment. She knew her state, admitted it, and was thankful that in spite of it God had favored her with the great privilege of giving birth to the Savior of the world. So favored by a gracious God, Mary’s heart flowed over with thankful song.

Just as amazing as God’s choice of lowly Mary is his choice of us. We didn’t choose him; he chose us. We didn’t come seeking him; he came seeking us. It was not our worthiness; it was his favor. It’s time to take out our baptismal certificates again and marvel anew at how God

favored us with his grace. He put the sign of his Son's cross on our hearts, wrote our names in his Book of Life in heaven, solely because of his grace! It's time to pay special attention as in each sermon we hear how he gave his one and only Son, not just to be the Savior of the world but our Savior too, and of how solely because of his grace, he has changed that "*whoever* believes in him shall not perish" into our names. It's time to stand at that Communion altar to feel his hand on our shoulders and see his love-filled eyes looking at us, as he offers us his very body and blood in assurance of every sin forgiven in our lowly lives, solely because of his grace.

When we do, no one will have to tell us to sing along with Mary.

**Prayer:** Lord, what great things you have done for us, sending the Savior for undeserving sinners. Accept our songs of praise as we raise them to your glorious throne. Then help us translate those songs into lives that resound with praise for you daily. In the Savior's name we ask it. Amen.