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Matthew F. Morry

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THE MAGNIFICAT: REFLECTIONS

In his “Choruses from ‘The Rock,’” T. S. Eliot ironically notes:

The endless cycle of idea and action
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.

It saddened this Christian poet—as he looked out upon his world, his society, his twentieth-century generation with its claims to progress—to have to acknowledge that not even the most prodigious feats of technology can bring human beings to “knowledge of the Word” that is Jesus the Christ. Possibly, what may have added to the burden of his sadness is the fact that such knowledge of the Incarnate Word, Son of God, was readily available. For, in another age, another author expressed himself with ease and confidence in his efforts:

Seeing that many others have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have taken place among us, exactly as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, I in my turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning, have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, so that your Excellency may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received. (Luke 1:1-4)

St. Luke proposed to himself to communicate precisely knowledge of the Word. He had confidence in his work since he relied on original eyewitnesses to the events that had come to fulfillment in the time period he determined to report. Such intimate and convinced witnesses, together with his own investigation, form the basis from

which Luke sets about to articulate this tradition in a manner which will be comprehensive, accurate, authoritative and orderly, so that one may both receive the truth of the life and mission of Jesus the Christ and be convinced that it is true.

This is his intention: that [you] may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received (1:4). His purpose is to show how God brings to fulfillment all the promises of the Old Covenant with the decisive divine intervention through the person, life, and mission of Jesus the Christ Who brings God's salvation to God's people to the ends of the earth for all time. God remains mindful of His promises and fulfills them in every generation. Luke, then, offers us knowledge of the Word, and we can rely on his presentation.

Now, I note that one may examine, then write about a text from a strictly historical-critical aspect, and there are those who would be interested in that. One may examine, then write about a text from a textual-critical aspect, and there may be some who would be intrigued by that. One may examine a text to find out what it is all about, then reflect theologically on that text,¹ and that is *how* I am writing on this text of St. Luke so familiar to so many as Mary's *Magnificat*:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
and my spirit exults in God my savior;
because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.
Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,
for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is his name,
and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him.
He has shown the power of his arm,
he has routed the proud of heart.

¹ Understand "reflect theologically" as the intellectual activity for considering an integral theology. By "integral theology" is meant one that arises out of and embraces its own immediate sources—Sacred Scripture, Patristic Tradition, Ecclesiastical Tradition (the Popes and Councils), the faith of the Church in transmission—within the contextual mode of communication flowing from a philosophy adequate to enlighten the realities under examination.

He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
 The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away.
 He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy
 —according to the promise he made to our ancestors—
 of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.
 (Luke 1:46-55)

This text, if analyzed in itself for fuller clarity, must still be kept in the context of the purpose of Luke's work if its function and nature are to be fully appreciated.² Thus, if it is correct, as commentators observe, that Luke was a master in the art of writing, then we must avoid treating parts of his whole writing as if they are jarring intrusions into his complete account of the revelation he seeks to place before us. As a careful craftsman, Luke would have us appreciate how each part contributes to the total presentation. Placed within such a context, we may be able to see how this song of praise contributes to carry out the purpose of Luke's work.³

Some commentators observe that the *Magnificat* has only a vague connection in what is transpiring in the Annunciation episode. Indeed, among these commentators, some go further and note that one might remove these verses entirely without disturbing the flow of the narrative.⁴ Commentators may voice their opinion indeed, but Luke placed it precisely as he wished it to be, and Luke is an accomplished literary artist.⁵ And what a marvel of integration it is: first, to highlight the identity of Mary—the Virgin, the Mother of the Son of the Most High, the model of the “Poor of Yahweh”—the authoritative witness to the intervention in time of the everlasting, loving presence of God and His reign; secondly, to an-

² Tannehill, Robert C., “The Magnificat as Poem,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 275.

³ Legrand, Lucien, *L'Annonce à Marie* (Paris: Les Editions Du Cerf, 1981), 220, 343, ff.; Farris, S., *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives* (England: Journal for the Study of the New Testament Press, 1985), 16.

⁴ Farris, *Hymns*, 21, 26, 111.

⁵ Legrand, *L'Annonce*, 220, 343.

nounce the fulfillment of the promise, now not only for Israel but also for all who “hear the word of God and put it into practice” (8:21; 11:28); thirdly, to console the Church, the poor of Yahweh—the Remnant, that the might of the “arm” of the Lord protects and raises her up, and this for succeeding generations unto the day of the Lord.⁶ With the deftness of the artist and with the enlightened words of the theologian, St. Luke focuses our attention to see ahead to the message he spells out in vibrant and pregnant language, the good news: “How happy are you who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God” (6:20).

The *Magnificat* follows announcements concerning the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus the Son of the Virgin Mary, and Mary’s visit to Elizabeth. So, the immediate context of the *Magnificat* is the visit to Elizabeth. In this section, Elizabeth utters her praise of Mary; she praises Mary as the Mother of the Lord and as woman of faith. Mary responds to Elizabeth’s praise with her own song. Thus, the *Magnificat* responds to Elizabeth as a praise of God. But the *Magnificat* is also a proclamation of the divine fulfillment. The role, then, of the *Magnificat* is: (1) in response to Elizabeth, it praises God; (2) it proclaims God’s intervention in authentic human existence.

The *Magnificat* gives praise to God. It praises God for the great things He has done in Mary. But what God has done in Mary touches all His people. The Spirit has overshadowed her and she has conceived the Son of the Most High.⁷ Now the Child she carries is the One Who fulfills the promises made to God’s people. Out of Mary’s fruitfulness comes the hope for all peoples. The *Magnificat* is a witnessing to the fulfillment of God’s promises, a proclamation of God’s preference for the poor of Yahweh. This hymn of praise answers the question why Mary rejoices at the lot of the lowly, the *’anawim*. It is not because of what this world offers or what the

⁶ Dreyfus, François, O.P., “Remnant,” in *DBiT*, 486.

⁷ Brown, Raymond E., S.S., *The Birth of the Messiah* (N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), 353, note 45.

'*anawim* may hope to attain from this world but, rather, it is because of what God does and offers, what the '*anawim* stand to attain in the world to come. What guarantee does she offer to these poor of God? Mary acclaims that there is a tearing down, a reversal: God will see to it that the proud, the mighty, the rich give way to the pleas and cries of the poor whose needs will be satisfied—for it is to those of whom He is mindful that God grants His favors (Lk. 1:54).

The woman uttering this witness to the divine intervention into authentic human existence is the Virgin Mother of the Messiah, the true disciple, who “hears the word of God and puts it into practice” (8:21). Mary is the Woman of Faith, the joyful, lowly one who stands before God as filled with His grace; she is the woman who stands before all generations that continue to acknowledge her fortune in God, the woman confident that eschatological joy has come.⁸ In a word, this woman proclaims that divine fulfillment is for all who also are God’s people—the poor and oppressed remnant, which is the Church.⁹ Since she is God’s favored one (1:28), since the power of the Most High overshadowed her and fills her with His presence, since she is the lowly one before God who in faith accepts His word—what Mary wants us to understand is that this song is not just an abstraction to fill with the lyrics of a song but *the reality* which involves *the Power* to change and to save the world: Jesus the Messiah is come!¹⁰

It is this serene joy and confidence in receiving the word of God faithfully that permeates Mary’s song of praise and makes its message convincing to all succeeding descendants of Abraham, our Father in Faith (Rom. 4:18-25). So, the *Magnificat* is a *message of fulfillment*—fulfillment of all that God has promised to His people: the world has a savior; eternal life can be ours. It is a *message of confident hope*—all our needs will be filled, our cries will be answered—for it is the kingdom of God which is before us. It is a *message of faith*—for those

⁸ Brown, *Birth*, 333.

⁹ Brown, *Birth*, 340.

¹⁰ Legrand, *L'Annonce*, 222.

who receive the word of God and practice it. It is a *message of identity*—for those who are the lowly, those who in their oppression must humbly place their confidence and trust in God their Savior.

As a message of hope, the *Magnificat* focuses upon those who receive God's word and cast themselves upon the might of His arm to deliver them. These are the "poor of Yahweh," the remnant.¹¹ To them the word is announced: the reign of God is here!

Now, the "poor of Yahweh" have a long history in the Revelation. Many of the poor, it is seen, are the victims of the injustice of other human beings. So Amos can caustically condemn the heartless officials: "You that turn judgment into wormwood and forsake justice in the land" (5:7); ". . . I have made my decree and will not relent: because they have sold the virtuous man for silver and the poor man for a pair of sandals, because they trample on the heads of ordinary people and push the poor out of their path, . . ." (2:6-7). Nor could Isaiah restrain himself: "Yahweh calls to judgment the elders and princes of this people: 'You are the ones who destroy the vineyard and conceal what you have stolen from the poor. By what right do you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor?'" (3:14-15). So, this is the group, the underprivileged, the oppressed who cry to Yahweh about "their dehumanization, their lack of family stability, their need of a home, their inability to earn a livelihood, their persecution, their oppression, their discouragement."¹² Still, "the cry of the poor" reaches the ears of God (Job 34:28). So the Psalms have us see the poor come forth as the friends and servants of Yahweh (86:1 f.); in God the poor feel secure (34:5-11). But the poor are not

¹¹ Gross, Heinrich, "Remnant," in *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology* (ed. by J. B. Bauer; N.Y.: Crossroads, 1981), 743: "The constitution of this remnant is determined not quantitatively according to its numerical size but qualitatively by the faith and holiness of its members. To it, as the nucleus which remains loyal, *all the privileges of the chosen people* are transferred. Above all it becomes *the bearer of the promises of salvation*; God's plan of salvation is accomplished for it and through it."

¹² Gelin, Albert, *The Poor of Yahweh* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1964), 20-21.

only the downtrodden, the refuse of society, the unwelcome guests, they are also the unfortunate ones who are meek, truly humble (Pss. 10:17; 18:28; 37:11), who fear the Lord in Whom they have a deep and abiding faith and trust (Zp. 2:3). These are the objects of God's loving care, recipients of the goods of the Lord (Is. 49:13; 66:2; Zp. 3:12 f.). Thus, poverty takes on the aspect of the "ability to welcome God, an openness to God, a willingness to be used by God, the humility before God"; it is the Lord who says: "But my eyes are drawn to the man of humbled and contrite spirit, who trembles at my word" (Is. 66:2). And the lowly react: "For the Lord has been kind to his people, conferring victory on us who are weak; the faithful exult in triumph, prostrate before God they acclaim him . . ." (Ps. 149:4; Lk. 10:21).¹³ So the "poor of Yahweh" know they are God's favorites:

Look down, Lord, from your holy dwelling place and give a thought to us, take heed of us and listen, look at us, Lord, and consider; the dead down in Sheol, . . . are not the ones to give glory and due observance to the Lord; the person overcome with affliction, who goes his way bowed down and frail, with failing eyes and hungering soul, he is the one to give you glory Lord and due observance. (Bar., 2:16-18)

The hopes and aspirations of Yahweh's poor became the ideal of the primitive Church (Acts 2:45; 4:32,34-35) for Jesus had enunciated a principle to guide His followers: "How happy are you who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20). Jesus had indicated that in Him was the promise fulfilled: "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor" (Lk. 4:18-19; Is. 61:1 ff.).

So Jesus comes as the Messiah of the poor, Himself a poor man (Lk. 2:7; Mt. 13:55, 8:20, 27:35); He identifies Himself with them

¹³ Gelin, *Poor*, 26, 33-35.

even as *tapeinosis* (the lowly one, Mt. 11:29). And so, the followers of Jesus learn:

Material possessions are, however, only one of the objects of total renunciation to which one must agree if he is to be the disciple of Jesus (cf. Lk. 14, 26.33). But to outline the complete picture of the "poor in spirit," heirs of the *'anawim*, it is necessary also to note the conviction they have concerning their personal wretchedness on the religious level with respect to their need for God's help Through their need and weakness they resemble children; and like these latter, they possess the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 18, 15ff.; Mt. 19,13-24).¹⁴

Gelin observes that "The great symphony of prayer that arose from the Church of the poor was a prelude to the *Magnificat* And each one of the *'anawim*, each member of the true Israel, prepared for and proclaimed her [Mary]."¹⁵

Do we see the Son of Mary in the poor, the oppressed, the wholly uninfluential of this world? This is not mere rhetoric. For Jesus cautions us: "Anyone who listens to you listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects me, and those who reject me reject the one who sent me" (Lk. 10:16; Mt. 25:34-40). So, that status of poverty as described must be considered in the light of the kingdom of God (Lk. 12:21). Just as through Mary's consent the human race opened itself to receive God enfleshed, so too through their model Mary the poor receive the irruption of divine goods into their lives and existence. What was done in her as the lowly handmaid of God the poor may expect to experience in themselves who are like Mary in their lowliness *and* in their faith before the Lord. We may not separate the element of poverty—whether material or spiritual—from the faith which must be in the lowly ones of Yahweh. Mary is not merely the crying poor one, but also and especially the preeminent believing disciple.

¹⁴ Roy, Leon, "Poor," in *DBiT*, 437.

¹⁵ Gelin, *Poor*, 93.

To the poor, the remnant, the hymn offers compelling reasons for hope. The period of waiting is over. The child in the womb of Mary is the promised Messiah, who “emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, . . .” (Phil. 2:7-8). With Mary the poor can rejoice, for it is God-Savior Who looks upon the lowly, and His mercy just goes on and on to those who stand before Him in fear (Rom. 11:5-7).

Mary’s words here are a vehicle of God’s continuing self-revelation of His on-going intervention in authentic human existence. They are still being addressed to the lowly, abject, oppressed—to the remnant which is the Church.¹⁶ For, even as Mary spoke for the whole human race in giving her consent at the Annunciation, so she speaks for all the *’anawim*, for God’s poor who possess a “total humility and consequently a limitless trust in God.”¹⁷ And so Mary, in her hymn proclaiming the coming of the Messiah of the poor, proclaims God’s preferential option for the poor.

This then is the message of the *Magnificat*. But does it have theological resonances for our day? Do we not see that, because we are children of Abraham, the song of Mary speaks its message to us?¹⁸ Observe how Mary strikes the note of continuity in the saving act of God: “All generations will call me blessed”; “His mercy reaches from age to age on those who fear him”; and, “He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever” (Lk. 1:48b, 50, 54-55). It is the sweep of the divine eschatological force that has irrupted into the world: God calmly continues to round off the history of each one of us.¹⁹

Thus, the *Magnificat* becomes a testament for each one of us. It has this personal dimension but also an ecclesial dimension. While

¹⁶ Dreyfus, “Remnant,” in *DBiT*, 486.

¹⁷ Gelin, *Poor*, 113, 108.

¹⁸ Farris, *Hymns*, 9-10.

¹⁹ Maestri, William F., *Mary: Model of Justice* (N.Y.: Alba House, 1987), 68 ff.

it was a response to Elizabeth, for us, in its ecclesial dimension, it is the glad, joyful announcement of the fulfillment of the Covenant, i.e., it is the New Covenant. We who are the partners of this New Covenant have to be impressed with what it tells us: you are the poor of the Lord, the remnant, in you has the good news come to fruition—the Kingdom of God is yours.²⁰

And, yet, if in the Lucan theology there is the eschatological dimension—that God in His care and love will eventually bring about the reversal of the human condition—as seen in the first beatitude and first woe (Lk. 6:20,24) and in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-26), this aspect of the eschatological dimension is found in Mary's *Magnificat* ("The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away" 1:53).²¹ And this eschatological dimension embraces a wide mass of suffering humanity:

For the "poor" in the Lucan Gospel are not only to be understood as the economically and socially poor . . . but are associated with prisoners, blind persons, the downtrodden (4:18), or with those who hunger, weep, are hated, persecuted and rejected (6:20b-22), or with blind people, cripples, lepers, and deaf people—even the dead (7:22). In other words, the "poor" represent generically the neglected mass of humanity . . . The rich and poor in the Lucan writings symbolize, in effect, the rejection and acceptance of Jesus the prophet announcing the new message of God's salvation and peace.²²

If the rich and poor in the Lucan message symbolize the rejection and acceptance of Jesus and His word, the proclamation of Mary in the *Magnificat* comes to the Church, the poor-remnant, with a vibrantly clear message: God-Savior has come into the world. With

²⁰ Gross, H., "Remnant," 743; Fitzmyer, Joseph A., S.J., *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), 361: "The remnant of Israel is to have a new meaning, for it is to be reconstituted in a way that will extend the promises of the old to others not under the Law."

²¹ Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 248-249.

²² Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 250-251.

His might He will reverse the order of things. What must especially be emphasized is that the poor of God have Jesus the Messiah as their shepherd and will share His kingdom of Glory. Jesus is the “shepherd and guardian of our souls” (I Pt. 2:25).

But, it has been observed: “To reduce the *Magnificat* to a canticle of gratitude, because God has rewarded the merit of Mary’s humility, is to misunderstand the history of salvation and to void the *Magnificat* of its salvific content.”²³ There are supporters of the Liberation Movement who identify Mary with the character and position of the poor and point especially to the *Magnificat*.

Twentieth-century Mariology has been described as seeking to add new privileges to the crown of Mary rather than to the real exigencies of the faith of the people Mariology has been more applicable to individual morality, especially sexual, than to socio-political and popular issues,²⁴

The schism between a popular devotion to Mary and a theological Mariology, which is abstract and distant from the world of the poor, can be overcome only by elaborating a Mariology of the poor.²⁵

Still, to demand a Christ who will deliver to us the riches of this world is to retreat to the very mentality opposed by the prophets and Jesus. Such an attitude may have entered into the considerations of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith as it observes:

Awareness of man’s freedom and dignity, together with the affirmation of the inalienable rights of the individuals and peoples is one of the major characteristics of our time. But freedom demands conditions of an economic, social, political and cultural kind which make possible its full exercise. A clear perception of the obstacles which hinder

²³ Codina, Victor, “Mariology of the Poor,” *Christus* 527 (1983): 6.

²⁴ Codina, “Mariology,” 2.

²⁵ Codina, “Mariology,” 8.

its development and which offend human dignity is at the source of the powerful aspirations to liberation which are at work in our world.²⁶

Thus a theology of freedom and liberation which faithfully echoes Mary's *Magnificat* preserved in the Church's memory is something needed by the times in which we are living.²⁷

May we see in the words of the *Magnificat* a source for a theology of those seeking freedom and liberation? In the *Magnificat* we identify (1) certain factors specific for a theology of freedom and liberation, and (2) elements for the basis of a theology of freedom and liberation.

A. Factors specific for a theology of freedom and liberation:

1. The *Magnificat* is Mary's effective witness to the arrival of salvation: for God, Whom she carries in her womb, will answer the cries of the poor.
2. Mary is the effective spokeswoman as intercessor for the "poor of the Lord."²⁸
3. Mary is the preeminent model of what is expected in the poor of the Lord: *utter faith!*
4. With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, God's reign, promised to the poor, is effective *now*.
5. Those who will receive the favors of God are the lowly, those who recognize and reverence His sovereignty (i.e., those who fear Him).
6. God's favors will be received, and must be acknowledged.
7. To Mary, the woman of divine predilection, praise and blessings must be rendered.

²⁶ "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation," in *Origins* 15, no. 44 (April 17, 1986): 713.

²⁷ "Instruction," 727.

²⁸ John Paul II, "Redemptoris Mater," in *Origins* 16, no. 43 (April 9, 1987): 760.

8. Hope is the character of the message, since fulfillment is already guaranteed.
9. Poverty is never sought for its own sake; it is meant to develop a humble dependence upon God, Who will certainly give His kingdom to the "little flock."²⁹
10. Just as poverty is never sought for its own sake, neither is the amassing of wealth, power and influence in this world. Both poverty and wealth are to be considered in light of the kingdom of God (Lk. 12:21).
11. Institutions inimical to the aspirations of the poor of Yahweh are those which despise the rights and dignity of these lowly ones (Lk. 1:51-52).
12. The *Magnificat* offers us the concrete grounds for the certitude of hope: that out of the Old Israel has come the New Israel, the Church, existing in its eschatological joy.

B. Elements for the basis of a theology of freedom and liberation: The *Magnificat* provides certain insights the theologian may use as guidelines to articulate the relationship of the poor of Yahweh—today's Church—to God our Savior. In this way Mariology may speak to a theology of freedom and liberation (cf. Rom. 8:18-28).

1. *The attitude of the poor of the Lord is to arise from faith and be sustained through certain hope.*

The faith which the *Magnificat* proclaims:

- in God as Savior
- in God the Almighty
- in God the merciful
- in God the just one
- in God the provident

²⁹ Stuhlmüller, C., C. P., *The Gospel of St. Luke* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1964), 101.

- in God the Holy One
- in God our destiny (the eschaton)
- in God's preferential option for the poor
- in God Who comes to our help and frees us from sin.

2. *Our authentic existence is to be in the kingdom of God.*

This demands utter faith. Out of this faith must come the trust and conviction that God responds to what we need to be in the kingdom and to remain.³⁰

Just as poverty and riches must be considered in view of the kingdom of God, so too freedom and liberation—in the sense that they are rights given to each one of us by God, and even as there will be a renewal of the whole universe, so there must be a renewal of each one of the poor of Yahweh.

Further, even as poverty and riches symbolize the acceptance or rejection of Jesus, so too freedom and liberation may symbolize the acceptance or rejection of Jesus—rejection resulting if that kind of freedom or liberation is sought which projects the person into the state of freedom and liberation by acting beyond norms or principles received in the Revelation and the Tradition.

3. *There must be the conviction that God has fulfilled His promises.*

Basic to an appreciation of this insight is that there must be evaluation of the kinds of things sought in the present and the eternal things: a comparison of this world and the kingdom of God.

4. *Mary remains a viable model for each member of the Church today because of: her identity with us as *tapeinosis* (lowly one), her faith, and the certitude of her hope.*

³⁰ Maestri, *Mary: Model*, 53-54.

So, to achieve freedom and liberation as an individual, one must be—like Mary, the faithful *tapeinosis*—a faithful, lowly servant of God our Savior. The same principle is valid for the collectivity. To achieve vertical unity—of man and God—there must be horizontal unity, the solidarity of the *'anawim*. Now, the solidarity with those seeking freedom and liberation is to be based on the realization that the poor of the Lord—the remnant—is the Church. It is the Church which is seeking freedom and liberation (as a safeguard against an “us and them mentality” which would pit members of the Church against one another).

In summary, the following is presented as a *model* Mariological principle to support a theology of freedom and liberation (freedom from sin as well as from human, material needs, and liberation from any ties to the world separating us from God and preventing our possession of the kingdom of God):

Mary, the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church—the poor of Yahweh—and *the* believing disciple is *in* and *through* the Church the preeminent effective model to the lowly, faithful disciple for achieving authentic human existence, which is the peaceful, joyful possession of the Eschaton—God-Savior Glorified—present in each one of us now in the on-going renewal towards the day of the Lord. (I Cor. 1:8; I Thess. 5:2,4)

Earlier, we heard the poet bemoan “knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.” Now we hear God in His words instructing us concerning knowledge of the Word: Give ear to Mary who in her lowliness achieved soul-filling knowledge of the Word: she believed.

MATTHEW F. MORRY, O.P.
Providence College
Providence, R.I.