

The Magnificat Final Days of Advent Tuesday, December 22, 2015 8:15 AM
1 Sm 1:24-28; **Lk 1:46-56** (Preamble for discipleship: to let one's soul glory in the Lord
and let the Lord exalt oneself for his purposes.)

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.”

This hymn, so-called Magnificat from the word “to magnify,” is a beautiful statement of a **soul in a right relationship with God.**

Now by soul we mean the human capacity for inwardness, for consciousness. In a way, soul belongs to everything living, but not to a deep degree. **In the human being soul arrives at a deep level of inwardness and self-awareness.** As far as we know, although we don't know everything, but as far as we know, most life forms, although they do have an awareness of a sort, don't have self-awareness, although some might; I don't know. But we surely have this as a capacity: self-awareness. The problem is of course, for the most part, due to sin, due to this warping of human life that we call original sin, wherever it is, **most people grow up trying to proclaim the greatness of themselves.** That is the human tendency, especially among those who are successful or rich or powerful or who have wherewithal, who are among the ruling classes, the people who know, the people who can.

Mary stands out as one who has deep and profound awareness, and her awareness magnifies the Lord. And **this is the essence of worship**—this is the essence of worship. This is a kind of **a constitution for a new way of living.** This is rightly called **“humility,” and it is in no way self-deprecatory.** Nothing about this is self-deprecatory or self-defeating or putting oneself down, nothing about it at all. In fact Mary says, **“All generations will call me blessed”**—all generations! This is a statement of fact, but it's also an expression of great self-esteem. But **her self-esteem is based on what God is doing,** and she is willing to go along with what God is doing. But it yields a very wonderful sense of worth and value and, yes,

importance, although it's not usually what we call self-importance. Normally what we call self-importance is different from this. But **it is an appreciation of oneself in the eyes of God as a handmaid to God's providential work**, God's saving work in the world.

And in this I'm sure Luke the evangelist intends this to be a sort of **preamble for discipleship**. This is what it means to be a disciple; it means to **let one's soul glory in the Lord and let the Lord exalt oneself for his purposes**. God, after all, really wants people to be well thought of and worthy, and God wants people to flourish. God wills what is good in every way for us. It's just that that often clashes with what we think is good. So this is the beginning of a sort of education, **a sort of formation in what is really truly good**, as opposed to what we might imagine is good, because our imagination is so flawed by that condition we call original sin. However it has arrived in our earth, it's here; and the wise are aware of it and so try to acknowledge it, thus moving away from its influence. That's what Mary is doing here in the Magnificat.