

# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

## DO YOU SEE THE BULL?

Consider the bull standing just outside the stable, at Mary's shoulder. In today's first reading, we find Hannah sacrificing a bull in gratitude for her son, Samuel, whom she is entrusting to the Temple. Long a favored animal in God's covenant, the sacrifice of a bull indicates a meaningful change. In the Gospel of Luke, we hear Mary's song of praise for her son Jesus whom we know to bring with him massive change enduring thousands of years:

*He has shown the strength of his arm,  
and has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones  
and has lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

Read the prayer again, consider it in its entirety. It isn't surprising that it has been banned three times in the last century by dictators and oppressive governments.

Mary, a young teenage girl, socially and politically marginalized, found to be pregnant outside of marriage in a society that views her as property (of her father or her husband), sings of the goodness of her situation. She dares call herself blessed. She sings of the goodness of God and the ways God overturns power. Replacing pride and self-satisfaction with humility, she names her place on the margins as unjust and claims her place in the center through God's power.



In naming her place as blessed, Mary sings an eternal blessing on those like her who are outcast. Her song of praise reminds us that our God is aggressively inclusive and seeks out to lift up the poor, the rejected and those who continually get set aside by society. The Magnificat implicates Catholic health care. Serving this God requires us to upend the systems that perpetuate health care disparity, to run to the margins, open the cages, free the enslaved.

This Mary is not your obedient teenager, peaceful mother or a gentle dove. She is a powerful precursor to the subversive freedom and inclusion of her son's ministry. She is the woman who will mother the Messiah. She is a model for this time and all times where the people of God are called to stand up against injustice.

The Magnificat is the first Advent hymn. Passionate and wild, it calls us to what the Kingdom of God will look like on earth and what we must give up to get there. This Advent, may Mary's vision become ours, that we might re-imagine it not as something lost to the past, but as a vehicle for a newly ordered present.

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