



Advent Reflection for Monday, December 12th

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Luke 1: 46-56

And Mary said,

'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’

And Mary remained with her for about three months and then returned to her home.

Reflection by Carol Oliver:

As I read the passage, I immediately heard the song in my head of the “Magnificat,” – the song of Mary accepting the news that she will bear a child named Jesus, and he will be the son of God; I thought about how she does not even tell God “No”-she accepts the call to be the mother of Jesus. I wonder what kind of faith Mary had where she accepted that she would be the mother of God. I thought about Joseph. Very little is mentioned in the Bible as to how he feels about this. Imagine how he felt when Mary said to him, we are going to be parents of God’s child and I am still a virgin. I played the Magnificat in different version and even played the song in Spanish. There was somewhat of a soothing sound of Mary accepting this call, but also proclaiming the goodness of God and the powerful things that He would do throughout all generations of people to come.

It has been an interesting start of semester as I have questioned why am I still working with students. Is it really my call to continue to do this? It is getting more difficult as more mental health is prevalent or perhaps always there, but more prevalent post Covid? Lack of resources in my institution provide no guidance to student and staff on how to handle mental health. I am blessed with having psychological training that helps. However, this generation much more different than previous ones I have served are more needy in a world of much chaos both politically, socially and spiritually. I have questioned many times should I continue on this journey or perhaps seek another job in the area of student success, and provide oversight of programs with less student contact?

This fall I decided to join EfM and the mother’s asked me to chair Vi Lynk’s discernment committee. While my initial thought was “what am I getting myself into?”-I am grateful that I committed to both of these groups because I feel a warm sense of community and space where I can “land” and take a “sigh”- a time out to breathe and be with beautiful people. My work with college students can be exhausting and often depleting, my responsibilities at home and looking after aging parents, as an only child, can get overwhelming and yet I am blessed to have my meditation and yoga practice to help guide my week and help me to breathe. Yes of course we all breathe to stay alive, but to be present and in quiet space one needs to mindfully breathe and be present with oneself and for me I call it “being present with God.” My weekly virtual yoga classes also feel amazing to me. I love sharing my practice with my yogi students, even when I am tired there seems to be something spiritually that overcomes me as I teach my students to connect to their bodies and their breath. “My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” It requires discipline and

commitment. I offer you a few seconds of mindful breath. Close your eyes and take a breath in, take a breath out. Focus on the Breath...

The breath slows me down and gives me perspective when days are difficult and busy. Mary's song the "Magnificat," speaks of hope. That God will protect us from powerful people who do wrong, feed the hungry and be merciful. A humbling song reminding us all of what we are "called," to do and perhaps to find a spiritual home in the process. I wish you all a very spiritual Christmas and may you find a spiritual practice that illuminates the Holy Spirit in you and helps you to grow in loving hearts and mindfulness.

Carol Oliver came to live in Kensington with her parents since she was 13 years old and has never left the neighborhood. She is a project director for an honors program at Hunter College, where she serves low-income, first generation and underrepresented students, providing support and training in preparation for graduate studies. She is also a certified Yoga and Reiki teacher. She lives with her partner, Pablo, who she met on a plane ride to Puerto Rico during a trip with Mother Sarah for Hurricane Maria relief.

