Fourth Sunday in Advent 20 Dec 2015

Micah 5: 2-5
Psalm - The Song of Mary
Hebrews 10: 5-10
Luke 1:39-55

[Advent 4C December 20, 2015 Textweek](#)

We are almost there, the fruit of the womb is ripening, and today's readings bring into focus the figure of Mary; we are being drawn inward into an awareness of gestation, rather than the outbound travelling star-gazers that we have been as we've journeyed through Advent

Soon we will be fully into the nativity narratives of the gospels of Matthew and Luke; and these were carefully crafted to illustrate for us, in drama, what the writers discovered in and through their encounter with Christ.

The story of the nativity, and the various scenes leading up to the arrival at the stable are not documented events, rather they comprise a deliberate story to engage us and to make us think beyond the reality of the drama and discover for ourselves the enlightenment Jesus reveals.

The choosing of a birth narrative, by two out of four gospel writers, is a good and obvious choice as it is perhaps the most ideal icon to illustrate that Christ reveals a new worldview, a new beginning, a new orientation and a whole new experience of life; "He abolishes the first in order to establish the second", he brings to birth a new order of being.

The readings today all focus our attention on Mary, perhaps 'the' central character in the whole narrative.

The early church, and much of the present day church, read the story of the nativity as actual event and so they had to create a Mary worthy of and in parallel to the Christ figure that they were putting on a pedestal..
So within the catholic tradition we have in Mary a nun-like figure with various titles; and even though elevated to queen of heaven she has been pretty much out of the picture since her role in the stable, and even that role has been diminished to onlooker, one who peers into the glorious manger of the Christ-child.

However, if we explore the birth narratives as illustrations of the enlightened revelations of Jesus we can more critically ask, who is this Mary; and so discover that she is far from the nun-like saint of the catholic tradition…

The second reading from Hebrews gives us the true Christ-likeness of Mary;

> "when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me";

what Christ said, or revealed Mary did, she gave and became in reality the body of Christ, she birthed the reality of what was spoken.

> "Then he added, "See, I have come to do your will."

; once again what Christ revealed in his teaching, became the "yes" that Mary voiced, she enfleshed what had been revealed.

As Paul explains in his letter;

> "He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. 10 And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all",

in the drama of the nativity we see this realised in Mary, she brings to birth a new order, and is sanctified, made holy through her offering of herself.

In the character of Mary we perhaps see the true icon of our claim as 'being the church'.

The writers of the nativity stories drew on, and sought validation of their own long held traditions and beliefs, and so we can see that the references from the Old Testament were brought forward into the story of Christ's birth.

Micah gives us the backdrop, the setting for the drama,

> "But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. 3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labour has brought forth"

Because that same Hebrew tradition spoke of a Messiah, a savior, the emphasis for the early church was one of establishing Jesus as that savior, however Jesus 'abolishes the first in order to establish the second', he goes way beyond any primitive expectation for a Mr fix-it.

And as the gospel writers crafted their 'story of Jesus' so the reality of what Jesus reveals creatively found itself threaded through the drama.

Mary in being the God-bearer, is not the mother of a savior, rather she is the embodiment of what Christ revealed, she is his teaching made real.

When we ask who is this Mary, we can discover so much about our calling for we like her are called to be bearers of the divine, and birthers of the reality of God; we too can find our sanctification in the giving of ourselves.

Who is this Mary?

She is Queen Boadicea, much more than she is queen of heaven; giving her life and leading an uprising against the forces of Roman oppression.

She is Joan of Arc, "The Maid of Orléans", more than being handmaid of the Lord, giving her life for a greater cause than self and fighting forces of domination and control.

She is Marie Curie, one whose work brought about new insights for the whole of humanity, she
became the first woman to be entombed on her own merits in the Pantheon in Paris, and that reveals another dimension, for the inscription above the entrance to the Pantheon reads "To great men, the grateful homeland"

Mary is also Albert Einstein who saw beyond the obvious and looked into the timelessness of life; credited with the best known equation of all time, so too Mary's 'yes' will always be an icon pointing a way forward for us.

She is Gandhi; employing nonviolent civil disobedience, having a baby out of wedlock; and an inspiration for civil rights way beyond her time. Like Gandhi she too earned the honorific title Mahatma which means "high-souled".

The list is endless and even includes Lady Gaga, who song the Edge of Glory, reflects in essence the Song of Mary we shared as today's Psalm.

When we look at Mary, we're looking at the very best of ourselves, each and every one of us.

God gave God-self into the manger of humanity
How was this accomplished?
We see in the figure of Mary that the gift is realised in our bearing God into reality
It is not the action of the divine,
but rather **our** divine action that is creative of life and of love..