



CHAPTER 1: 41-55

The Gospel of Luke

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For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

Luke's gospel is a compilation of various interviews with eye-witnesses and close followers of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). The author, Luke, probably did not become a Christian until several years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is first mentioned (implicitly) in Acts 16:10 (Acts is another book of the New Testament which Luke wrote). He did not, therefore, meet Jesus in the flesh and he himself was not an eye-witness.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Continuation of Luke 1: 41-55

Ver. 41.—*And it came to Pass when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, &c.* Notice with S. Ambrose, that Elizabeth was the first to hear the salutation of Mary but John was the first to perceive the spirit and effect of her salutation; for to him, as the future forerunner of Christ, this salutation of the Virgin, yea, even of Christ, was chiefly directed. Theophylact says, “The voice of the Virgin was the voice of God incarnate in her.”

It is a question here whether the leaping of John for joy (Vulgate *exultavit*, Greek *ἑσκιζτησε*) was a natural or rational movement. Calvin thinks that it was only a natural one; but all the Fathers and Orthodox Doctors are of a contrary opinion. Origen says, “Then first Jesus made His forerunner a prophet,” and Irenæus (*lib. 3 c. 18*) says, “He recognised the Lord in the womb, and leaping for joy saluted Him.” And S. Gregory (*lib. 3 Moral. c. 5*). “In his mother’s womb he was filled with the spirit of prophecy.” So also S. Cyril, S. Ambrose, S. Chrysostom. All these maintain that this leaping of John was not only supernatural, but showed an active use of

this song in which the Blessed Virgin passes from the common blessings in old times bestowed by God upon Israel, to the peculiar one of the Messiah already incarnate in herself, which was the greatest and most excellent of all.

In remembrance, &c. The cause why God sent Christ was His compassion on Israel and the whole human race, doomed to death and hell on account of their sins. Whence S. Leo says, “The cause of our restoration is none else than the compassion of God.” God is said to have remembered, because He seemed to have left men in their miseries for four thousand years and to have forgotten His promise made to the Fathers; now as it were having remembered it, He fulfilled it in Christ; for this compassion is none other than the salvation brought by Christ.

Ver. 55.—*As he spake to our fathers, &c.* The Virgin declares that this mercy, viz. the salvation brought by Christ, had been promised by God from ancient times to the fathers, Adam, Abraham, &c.; so that the Incarnation of Christ was not a fortuitous event, but from eternity had been provided and decreed by God for the salvation of Israel and of the whole world, and had been promised in time to all the Patriarchs from the beginning of the world; who themselves eagerly desired the same, and though they besought God for it with ardent longings, yet they did not obtain it, because God had decreed to reserve this great gift for this time and age.

To Abraham and his seed. These words are to be referred to the words *in remembrance of His mercy*, not to the words *as He spake to our fathers*, which are to be enclosed in a parenthesis. God by making Christ to be incarnate remembered His mercy formerly promised by Him to Abraham and his seed, that is, to the Israelites his descendants. For Christ was especially promised to them, but inasmuch as they rejected Him, God turned His mercy aside from them to the Gentiles who gladly received Him. He remembered Abraham both because he was the first Patriarch of Israel, and also because he excelled in faith and was therefore called by God the father of the faithful, and received the promise concerning Christ Who should be born of his seed.

Wherefore this seed, *i.e.* the children and posterity of Abraham, is not to be understood carnally of the Jews descended from him according to the flesh, but spiritually of the faithful believers in Christ both Jews and Gentiles, for these follow the example of the faith of Abraham the father of the faithful.

For ever. This word may be referred either to the word *seed*, so that the meaning is, the seed of Abraham will last for ever, or to the word *mercy*. God hath remembered His mercy, that is the salvation to be given through Christ; and it was His will that it should endure not for a hundred or a thousand years only, but for all eternity. Either sense comes to the same.

by this very thing exalted Joseph and constrained his brethren to bow down to him.

Ver. 52.—*He hath put down*, &c. As He put down the proud Saul from his royal throne by putting the humble David in his place; so He put the humble Mordecai in the place of the proud Haman, and Esther in the place of Vashti. God has done, and does, and will do the same in every age. Wherefore these past tenses. He hath scattered, put down, exalted, are to be taken in the widest sense, as signifying any time, future, present, or past, according to the Hebrew idiom. He hath put down therefore signifies He does and will put down. The Virgin alludes to the words of David, Psalm cxiii. 7, *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust*, &c.; and of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 7, *The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich*, &c.

Moreover, as often at other times, so at the time of the Nativity of Christ God put down the mighty from their seat almost throughout the whole world, which, after Julius Cæsar, Pompey, Lepidus, Antony, and other kings, tyrants, and princes had been removed, He had put in subjection to Augustus alone, who was a type of Christ, as Cyrus had been, Isa. xlv. 1. Whence, when Christ was born, he refused the title of Lord which was offered to him. Then also God put down from their seat Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, who were contending with each other for the government over Judæa. Herod also, the infanticide, was deprived of his life and kingdom; and shortly afterwards his whole royal progeny perished; as also did that of Augustus Caesar, that it might be declared that Christ was now born, and that every kingdom was due to him and was prepared for Him, as Daniel foretold, c. vii. 14.

Ver. 53.—*He hath filled the hungry*, &c. So He fed the Hebrews with manna from heaven for forty years in the wilderness. So He fed Elias when he was hungry by an angel, and Daniel in the den of lions by Habakkuk, and Paul, the first hermit, by a raven. So also He fed the Blessed Virgin, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, with the Word Incarnate, and He feeds all the faithful with the same in the Holy Eucharist, and will feed them still more in heaven. By the hungry the poor are intended, since the Virgin opposes the rich to them.

Ver. 54.—*He hath holpen His servant Israel*. God hath taken by the hand, raised up, helped and restored His people Israel, whom He loved and kept as a son or servant. He did this formerly by Moses, Joshua, David, &c.; and now much more has He done it, by sending to Israel the Messiah that had been promised. For at that time, the commonwealth and Church of Israel had fallen into ruins, since the sceptre had been taken away from them, and transferred to Herod and the Romans; and the priests, intent on their own gain, were negligent of the welfare of the people; wherefore the people were grievously afflicted with various miseries of mind and body. God therefore at a seasonable time sent Christ that He might deliver out of them all His own Israel, that is, all the faithful who were converted to Him, both from among the Jews and Gentiles; whence S. Augustine says, “He helped Israel; not the Israel which He found; but He helped Israel that He might make him; as a physician helps a sick man, that He might heal the weak, and redeem the captive, that He might justify the impious, and save the just.” For Israel in Hebrew is the same as *the man who sees God*, or rather, *one who has power with God*, Gen. xxxii. 28. This is the third part of

reason, and proceeded from true joyfulness of mind; and this is clear from the words of Elizabeth; *The babe leaped in my womb for joy*.

Secondly, this is clear, likewise, from the circumstance that John communicated his joy to his mother.

Thirdly, because in like manner the Blessed Virgin rejoiced when she sang the Magnificat, therefore also John rejoiced, who was the chief end and object of the visitation of the Blessed Virgin and of all these wonders.

John at this time received the gift of prophecy, as the Fathers already quoted show. He likewise received the extraordinary gifts which befitted the future forerunner of Christ. For this had been predicted by the angel when he said, “*he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb*.” In John, therefore, that saying of S. Chrysostom (*Hom. 30*) is true, “his leaping was a sign of perfect soundness;” and also, of sanctity.

Hence some think that John was free from sinful desire, and never committed venial sin; but this privilege seems to have been peculiar to the Blessed Virgin, to whom John was inferior. He had, therefore, sinful desire, and did commit venial sin, falling into it unawares, but perhaps, never deliberately. For it is a rule of S. Augustine and of theologians, that whoever has or has had original sin, has also sinful desire, and consequently commits venial sin; but John had original sin, therefore he must have committed venial sin.

Learn, morally, of what advantage the salutation and prayers of the Saints are, and especially of the Blessed Virgin, who by one word of salutation filled both John and Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit. “Not only the words, but the very aspect of the Saints is full of spiritual grace,” says S. Chrysostom. For the Saints, and above all the Blessed Virgin, are full of the fiery spirit of love. Wherefore he who strives to make other men spiritual should first fill himself with the Divine Spirit; for thus when he speaks he will breathe the same forth upon others, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. God also uses such men as suitable instruments united to Himself. For He is a most pure and powerful spirit; wherefore He accomplishes mighty spiritual results by means of spiritual men full of zeal, as being like Himself.

And Elizabeth was filled, &c. She who was before just and holy (verse 6) is now made much more just and holy, and besides received the gift of prophecy. Moreover John, as I said, was first filled with the Spirit, and then filled his mother also with the same; because by his own holiness, merits, and prayers, he obtained for his mother that she should be filled with the Holy Spirit, of which he was himself full. So S. Ambrose says, “Elizabeth first heard the word, but John first experienced the grace. The mother was not

filled before the son, but when the son had been filled with the Holy Spirit, he filled the mother also.”

Ver. 42.—*And she spake out with a loud voice and said, Blessed art thou among women.* Thou art most blessed of all women because thou hast been chosen to be the Mother of God Whom the whole world cannot receive.

Blessed is the fruit of thy womb. The fountain of all the blessings and graces bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin by God was to be the mother of God; for God adorned His mother with every grace in order that she might become an habitation worthy of Him, even that she might be worthy to become the Mother of God, and whom would such a Son bless rather than His mother. Elizabeth therefore, by the inspiration of the Spirit knew that Mary had already conceived, and that the Son of God was incarnate in her. And “He is Blessed, not only as thou art, among women, but, absolutely, above angels, men, and all creatures, as being the Creator and Lord of all. Again the rest of the sons of Eve are all under a curse, because they contract original sin from her and from Adam. Christ alone is Blessed because He is not the natural son of Adam, but was supernaturally conceived in the Virgin by the Holy Ghost.”

She alludes to the prophecy and promise made to David, *Of the fruit of thy body shall I set upon thy seat,* Psalm 132, II.

Ver. 43.—*And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* These are words of the greatest humility and reverence; John imitated his mother, saying when Christ came to be baptized of him, “I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest thou to me?”

Lord, that is God, Who is called absolutely *the Lord*, because He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Hence it is clear—1. That the humanity of Christ was already in Christ endowed with life and united to the Word or Son of God. 2. That the Blessed Virgin is rightly called *θεότοκος*, *i.e.*, Mother of God and not only *χριστότοκος*, Mother of Christ, as Nestorius maintained. 3. That in Christ there are two natures, the human, for this alone could He take of His Virgin Mother; and the Divine, which the Father alone communicated to Him; but one Person, not human, but Divine. For if in Christ there had been two persons, as there are two natures, God could not properly be said to have been born of a Virgin, to have suffered and been crucified, but another person, that is to say, a man, or the person of a man; but now it is properly so said, because there is one person in Christ; which is the reason why the attributes of the one nature may be ascribed in the concrete to the other, so that this man, Jesus, may properly be called God, eternal and Almighty; and on the other hand, God in Him may properly be called man, passible and mortal, yea, He may even be said to have suffered and died; because it is the same Person, which on account of the two natures which it has, is at the same time God and man, and accordingly assumes to itself the actions and attributes both of God and man. For action belongs to persons; and this sole (divine) Person in Christ is signified alike by the word man, or Jesus, and by the word God or Son of God. Wherefore what is truly said of one is also truly said of the other.

Ver. 50.—*And His mercy*, &c. As God is all-powerful and all-holy, so is He all-merciful, and that continually towards all who in any age love Him, and therefore fear to offend Him. This is the second part of this song, in which the Blessed Virgin passes from the peculiar benefits bestowed by God upon herself, to those bestowed in common upon all Israel, *i.e.* upon all the faithful.

Ver. 51.—*He hath shewed strength*, &c. The Virgin has been praising the mercy of God towards those who fear Him, and now she goes on to praise His severity and justice towards those who despise Him.

With His arm. The strength and power of God are anthropomorphically expressed by the hand, the finger, the right hand, but most of all by the arm, for the strength of man puts itself forth in his arms. The meaning therefore is, God has in every age wrought many things by His mighty arm, as in the case of Pharaoh by Moses, &c. But much more has God shown His power by causing Christ to become incarnate in me, by Whom He will mightily overthrow Lucifer, hell, death and sin. Whence Bede and Theophylact understand by His arm here, mystically, the Son of God incarnate in the Virgin. For He is the power of God, 1 Cor i. 24. There is an allusion to Isa. liii. i, *To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*

He hath scattered the proud; as He scattered and overthrew Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, &c.

In the imagination of their heart. Vulgate, *mente cordis sui*. Some refer these words to the heart of God, so that the meaning will be, God by His own heart, *i.e.* His will and decree, scattered the proud: so S. Augustine explains it. “In the imagination (or purpose) of His heart,” he says, “that is, in His deep counsel He scattered them. It was deep counsel for God to become man for me, and for the innocent to suffer in order that the guilty might be redeemed.” The Carthusian (Denis) follows this explanation, “In the purpose, *i.e.* in the intention and will of His heart, *i.e.* of His understanding, by which He discerns, judges, and orders all things.” But from the Greek it is clear that the word *sui* is not to be referred to the heart of God, but to the heart of the proud; for the Greek is *αὐτῶν, of them*. Whence Euthymius says, God scattered those who were proud in their heart.

Others refer the word *sui, of them*, to the word *dispersit, scattered*, so that the meaning is, God hath scattered the proud by means of the purpose (Greek, *διανοία*) of their heart, because He turns back their proud machinations to their own destruction, so that He disperses them, according to that saying Job v. 13, *He taketh the wise in their own craftiness*; as He did to Pharaoh when he followed the Hebrews through the Red Sea, by drowning him with all his followers in the same sea; and to the brethren of Joseph who sold him that they might destroy him, but God

be worshipped, adored, and celebrated in every way. God therefore is holy in all His works, and above all in this most holy mystery of the Incarnation of the Word; by which He sanctified Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and all the faithful.

Lastly, God incarnate is called holy because He assumed flesh and blood for the purpose of offering it to God, both in life, and on the cross, and in His death for the salvation of men. For as S. Isidorus says (*lib. 15, Origin. c.14*), "Nothing was called holy among the ancients unless it was consecrated or sprinkled with the blood of a victim. Also that is holy (*sanctum*) which is ratified (*sancitum*) with blood; moreover to ratify (*sancire*) is to confirm." See Heb. ix. 12, &c. S. Augustine (*lib 2 de Sermonibus Domini*. 31) says, "That is holy which it is impious to violate and defile; and assuredly any one is held guilty of this crime who only attempts or wills it with regard to a holy thing, which nevertheless remains by its nature inviolable and incorruptible." But S. Bernard (*Serm. 5 in Vigil. Nativ.*) makes sanctity or holiness consist in clemency and gentleness, according to that saying concerning Moses, Ecclesiasticus xlv. 4, *He that sanctified him in his faithfulness and meekness*; and he continues, "In order that sanctification may be perfect we have need to learn gentleness and courtesy in social life from the Saint of Saints; as He says Himself, *Learn of Me for I am meek and lowly in heart.*"

Hence some more recent interpreters refer the words *Holy is His Name*, to the following verse, *and His mercy*, &c., as if this were the holiness of God; but literally they must be referred to what precedes, as I have said. Hence Euthymius (*in Ps. II*) says, "He properly is called pious (*όσιος*) who observes piety and religion in those things which pertain to God; but he is called holy (*άγιος*) who is made a partaker of the Divine nature by following the path of virtue." Further, holy (*sanctus*) in Hebrew is *שדק* that is, removed and separated from all vice, blemish, and even from intercourse with the vulgar; as God is especially, Whose holiness and majesty is so far removed, so lofty and exalted, that it infinitely transcends all gods, angels, and men. Whence S. Dionysius (*De Divinis Nominibus*. c. 12) says, "Since holiness is free from all taint, and is purity altogether perfect and immaculate, hence God, from the superabundance of the purity and all the excellences with which He is filled, is called the Holy of Holies." And Bede says, "His name is called holy because in the height of His marvellous power He transcends every creature, and is widely removed from the works which He has made. This is better understood in the Greek tongue, in which the very word that means holy (*άγιος*) signifies as it were to be apart from earth: and by imitation of Him in our small measure we are taught to separate ourselves from all who are neither holy nor dedicated to God, by those words of the Lord, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*; for whoever has consecrated himself to God will rightly appear as one free from the world; for he is able even himself to say, while we walk upon the earth we have our conversation in heaven."

Christians therefore being called by Christ to fulness of holiness ought to be holy (whence they are continually called by S. Paul holy [or saints]), yea, more holy than all the faithful who lived in the time of Moses, Abraham, &c; for Christianity is nothing else than the life of Christ. Let the Christian therefore so live as it becomes the disciple of Christ, so that his life may be a living image, of the holiness of Christ, so that whoever sees and hears him, may seem to himself to see and hear Christ in him.

Ver. 44.—*The babe leaped*. Symbolically, the leaping of John prefigured his own martyrdom; for by his dancing he represented the dancing of the daughter of Herodias, by which having pleased Herod, she asked and obtained of him the head of John.

Ver. 45.—*Blessed*, &c. Elizabeth, therefore, knew by the Holy Spirit that the Blessed Virgin had believed the angel when he announced the conception and nativity of Christ. "Blessed art thou, both in fact because thou already bearest Christ within thee, and also in hope, because thou shalt bring forth Him Who will make thee and all who believe in Him blessed in heaven: Blessed therefore art thou before God and men." Elizabeth silently censures the unbelief of her own husband.

Ver. 46.—*And Mary said, My soul*, &c. Fitly does Mary make answer to the praises of herself celebrated by Elizabeth, by referring them to their fountain, *i.e.* to God. S. Bernard (*Serm. in Apoc. 12*) says, "Truly this is a song of high praise, but also of devout humility which suffers her not to retain anything for herself, but gives all back rather to Him Whose blessings bestowed upon herself she was celebrating. Thou, she says, magnifiest the Mother of the Lord, but my soul doth magnify the Lord. Thou declarest that thy son leaped for joy at my voice, but my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. He rejoices as the friend of the bridegroom at the voice of the bridegroom. Thou sayest she is blessed which believed, but the cause of faith and blessedness is the regard of the Celestial Goodness, so that on this account the rather all generations will call me Blessed, because God hath regarded the low estate of his handmaid." S. Bernard then shows that the Blessed Virgin, though she was most humble, yet in the faith of the promise made by the angel she was lifted high in soul, so that she doubted not that she was elected to so great a mystery, but believed that she would soon be the true Mother of God and man; for the grace of God so works in His elect, "that neither does humility make them feeble spirited, nor does exaltation of soul make them proud." God magnifies man in one way, and man magnifies God in another. God magnifies a man when He heaps upon him riches and honours, graces and gifts, and raises him above others; but man cannot magnify God in this way, for he cannot add anything to Him either great or small. He is said therefore to magnify God when he proclaims His greatness, *i.e.* His majesty, almighty power, holiness, wisdom, &c., The meaning of the Blessed Virgin's words therefore is, Thou, O Elizabeth, magnifiest me in honouring me with the magnificent title of Mother of God, but I magnify God Who has made me great, in giving me so great a Son, Who is God Himself, and has thought fit to bring to pass in me the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Word.

The Incarnation of the Word was the greatest of all the works of God. 1. It was a work of the highest power, to unite heaven to earth, God to man; 2. of the highest goodness, by which God communicated Himself wholly to man; 3. of the highest wisdom, by which He effected this union in a Divine

Person, so that the integrity of each nature, the human and the divine, was preserved to it.

With this, therefore, begins the song of the Blessed Virgin, which of all the songs of Holy Scripture, of Moses, Deborah, &c., is the most excellent, as being the most full of the Divine Spirit and exultation. The Church, accordingly, uses it daily in the Office of Vespers, in order that she may by it, in the highest manner, celebrate the glories and praises of God, and render the highest thanks to Him for the Incarnation of the Word and His other gifts, and that she may drink in the same affections of devotion, piety, love, and exultation that in uttering it the Blessed Virgin drank in from heaven.

There are three parts in this song. In the first (verse 46-50), the Blessed Virgin praises God for the peculiar blessings bestowed upon herself by God, especially for the conception of the Word. In the second (verse 50-54), she praises Him for the common blessings bestowed upon His whole people before the coming of Christ. In the third (verse 54 to the end), she returns to this greatest blessing of the Incarnation of the Word which had been promised to the fathers, and made known to herself.

My soul. Not only my tongue, nor my hand only, but my soul itself with all its power magnifies God. From the inmost recesses of my soul, with all the powers of my mind, I praise and glorify God; I employ and entirely devote all the strength of my soul in His praise; so that my understanding contemplates Him alone, my will loves and celebrates no being but Him, my memory dwells upon nothing but Him, my mouth speaks of and celebrates nothing but Him, my hand performs only those things which tend to His service, my feet move forwards only to those things which tend to His glory.

Symbolically, Toletus says, The Blessed Virgin rightly says *my souls*. Because she alone had her soul in her own power, and was mistress over it, because she possessed it in patience, having dominion over all its affections and passions. But we do not possess our souls, because we are ourselves possessed by anger, pride, concupiscence or some other like passion. 2. Because she had wholly delivered up her soul to her Son; and those things which belonged to her Son were hers also. Whence her soul having been delivered up to her Son returned entirely to her own power, and she truly calls it *my soul*. 3. On account of her loving affection for it; for the more any one loves God, the more he loves his own soul. Since, therefore, the Blessed Virgin loved God chiefly above all men, and had never committed any sin, she loved her own soul very greatly. And that which we love, on account of our love for it we call our own. She therefore who so loved her own soul, truly called it her own.

And my spirit hath rejoiced. Exultavit. The Blessed Virgin, admiring the divine power, holiness, justice, benignity of the Spirit of God incarnate in her, exults and leaps and sings for joy. Euthymius (*in Ps. 9*) says, “Exultation is, as it were, an intensified joy, which causes the heart to leap up vehemently with excess of joy, and to be raised on high.” Cajetan also says, “Exultation is an overflowing joy, which breaks forth, modestly however and seriously, in the external signs of gesticulation, singing and jubilation.”

than He has done with the exception of three: the Incarnation of the Word; the maternity of God; and the beatitude of man which consists in the vision of God; for God can do nothing better or greater than these, because nothing can be greater or better than God Himself. The Blessed Virgin is called by Hesychius, Bishop of Jerusalem (*hom. 2 de S. Maria*), “The entire complement of the Trinity, because both the Holy Ghost came to her, and sojourned with her, and the Father overshadowed her, and the Son, borne in her womb, dwelt within her.”

He that is mighty. Vulgate, *potens*; Greek, *ὁ δυνατός*. This is one of the ten names of God, for the Septuagint used to render the Hebrew word גַּבְרִיֵּל (*gibbor*), *i.e.* mighty, strong, whence is derived *Gabriel*, *i.e.* the strength of God. The Blessed Virgin, says Titus, adds this—first, that no one may disbelieve this mystery. Let no one wonder if I a virgin have conceived, for He Who hath wrought this work is the Mighty God. Secondly, that she may show that what the angel had promised (verse 35) is fulfilled in her, *the power* (Greek, *δύναμις*) *of the Highest shall overshadow thee*. She alludes to Isa. vii. 14 and ix. 6, *His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God* אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר (*Elgibbor*), *i.e.* mighty, strong as a giant; whence Gabriel announced His birth, whose name signifies the power and strength of God.

And holy is His name. The Blessed Virgin shows that the promise of the angel, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee*, was fulfilled; and therefore she says, *And holy is His Name*.

Toletus and Francis Lucas are of opinion that the Virgin here celebrates two great things as done to her by God—1. The Incarnation of the Word, by which she was made the Mother of God, and therefore the mistress and queen of all angels and men; and, 2. Her own Preparation and sanctification for the accomplishment of the Incarnation in her. For as it was a work of power for God to be made man of a virgin, so it was a work of holiness to prepare the Virgin so as to be fit for conceiving in her womb the Holy and Immaculate Word of God. For the Blessed Virgin was so sanctified by the Holy Ghost that she contracted no sin at all, and far exceeded all the angels, even the seraphim, in grace and holiness.

But more plainly and fully, we may refer both clauses of this verse to both works, namely, to the Incarnation of the Word as well as to her own preparation and sanctification for It. For each of these was a work of the excellent power as well as holiness of God, because each was accomplished by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon her to sanctify both Christ and the Virgin; according to the announcement of the angel, *That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*. For Christ was the Holy of Holies, the Fount of holiness, sanctifying the whole world.

The meaning therefore is, God Himself, as signified by His own name, is holy, possesses all purity, holiness, power, perfection, and therefore is to

All generations. All future ages and generations of the faithful. Cardinal Hugo says, "All generations, *i.e.* all nations of Jews and Gentiles, of men and women, of rich and poor, of angels and of men, because all through her have received a saving benefit: men have received reconciliation; angels restoration (of their numbers). For Christ the Son of God wrought salvation in the middle of the earth, that is, in the womb of Mary which by a certain wonderful propriety is called the middle of the earth. For, as S. Bernard says, towards it look both those who dwell in heaven and those who dwell in the lower regions, *i.e.* in purgatory, and those who dwell in the world. The first, that they may be filled up again, the second that they may be delivered, the third that they may be reconciled. And then, assigning the reason, he adds, from henceforth therefore, O Blessed Virgin, all generations shall call thee blessed, because thou hast brought forth life, grace, and glory for all generations, life for the dead, grace for sinners, glory for the miserable. Therefore it is said of her, Judith, c. xv. 10, "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the great rejoicing of our people, because thou hast done courageously. The first is the word of the angels, whose loss was repaired by her; the second is the word of men, whose sadness was by her changed into joy; the third is the word of women, whose dishonour was done away with by her; the fourth is the voice of the dead, whose captivity was brought back by her."

The truth of this prophecy of the Blessed Virgin is clear from the event; for we have seen her worshipped and honoured by all nations and generations with shrines, churches, festivals, congregations, societies of religious, vows, supplications, litanies in such numbers as the rest of the Saints joined together do not obtain; yea, to the Blessed Virgin alone is paid the worship of hyperdulia, as to God is paid the worship of latria, while to the rest of the Saints is paid the worship of dulia. Thy honour, thy praise and glory, O Blessed Virgin, will live as long as the angels shall live, as long as men shall live, as long as Christ shall live, as long as God shall be God, for ever and ever.

Ver. 49.—*For He that is mighty hath done to me great things.* For the Incarnation of the Word is a greater work than the creation of the whole world; wherefore the Blessed Virgin, as being the Mother of God, is greater than all angels, all men, and all creatures taken together. Augustine (*Serm. 2 de Assump.*) says, "What great things hath He done unto thee, O Lady, that thou shouldest merit to be called blessed? I truly believe that thou, a creature, gavest birth to the Creator; a servant, thou broughtest forth the Lord." "He that is mighty hath done to me wonderful things," says Titus, "since I, still a virgin, have conceived by the will of God, passing over the bounds of nature; I have been accounted worthy, without being joined to a husband, to be made a mother, not of any one, but of the Only Begotten Son of God."

Cardinal Hugo mentions twelve great things belonging to the Virgin:—1. Sanctification in the womb of her mother. 2. The salutation of the angel. 3. The fulness of grace. 4. The conception of her Son. 5. Fruitful virginity. 6. Virgin fruitfulness. 7. Her honoured humility. 8. Her ready obedience. 9. The devotion of her faith. 10. Her prudent modesty. 11. Her modest prudence. 12. The dominion over heaven. S. Thomas (*part. 1, qu. 25, art. 6*) teaches that it is possible for God to do better works

There is an allusion here to Isaiah lxi. 10, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God;* and still more to the words of Anna, 1 Sam. ii. 1., *My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, &c.*, for as Anna, who was barren, rejoiced in conceiving Samuel by the miraculous help of God, so the Blessed Virgin rejoiced in conceiving Emmanuel (of whom Samuel was a type) by the power of the Holy Spirit.

S. Augustine, writing on the Magnificat, shows that the Virgin here does two things: first, she praises the goodness and mercy of God, as in the preceding verse she had praised His power and majesty; secondly, she pours forth the expression of the sweetness and delight which she had received in the conception of her Son; and in this he says that the Mother of God imitated the angels, who in heaven perform these two things, *viz.*, meditate on the incomprehensible majesty of God, and enjoy His ineffable goodness and sweetness; and they so admire them as to rejoice in and love them. His words are, "Thou hast seen His majesty, thou hast tasted His sweetness; therefore that which thou hast received inwardly, thou hast poured forth abroad, and thou hast rejoiced in His justice. *My spirit hath rejoiced;* the soul magnifies; the spirit rejoices. *In God my Saviour:* the word God, denotes His power; the word Saviour (or salvation) denotes His mercy. For these are two things Which the spirits of angels and saints in that fountain of good drink in by eternal contemplation; *viz.*, the incomprehensible Majesty of God, and His ineffable goodness; the one of which produces a sacred fear, and the other love; they venerate God for His majesty; they love Him for His goodness; so that love being joined with reverential, fear may not be lost, and fear being joined with love may not have torment."

Lastly, as in the conception of the Word the very highest of blessings was bestowed upon the Virgin, so she experienced the very highest exaltation on account of it, so that her spirit seemed to leap forth for joy from her body, and to hasten forth towards God; and perhaps it would have done so, had not God by His power kept it in her body. For when she died several years after, she died not of sickness, but of love, joy, and the desire of seeing her Son, as Suarez and other theologians think. Moreover this exaltation, Albertus says, was not transient, but remained as a habit through the whole of her life. He adds, that on account of her possessing this continual exaltation in God, she was above all entirely dead to the world and to this mortal life, so that her life was always hid with Christ in God, and being present in the angelic court she dwelt in the sanctuary of God, and she could say in a more excellent manner than Paul or any other creature, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. vi.

My Spirit. That is, *my soul*, as Euthymius and others say; as if *my Spirit hath rejoiced, &c.*, were the same as *my soul doth magnify, &c.* But the opinion of Toletus and others is better, who think that *the spirit* is more than *the soul*; wherefore by the soul they understand the intellect, and by the spirit

the will. More simply, by *the soul* you may understand the lower part of the soul, which regards natural objects; by *the spirit* the superior part, which beholds spiritual and divine things. The soul, therefore, is natural and contemplates natural things; the spirit is supernatural and contemplates heavenly things. The spirit, therefore, signifies—1. the mind; 2. the vehement and fervent impulse of the mind towards joy; 3. that this impulse is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Spirit, as being the superior, draws the soul and body along with it, so that they likewise may exult with joy, according to the saying in Psalm 84, “My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.”

In God my Saviour. Vulgate, *salutari meo*; Greek, *σωτηῆζί μου*. The Syriac renders the words *in God my lifegiver* (*vivificatore meo*). Who will be-stow life, *i.e.* liberty, grace, and glory on me and all the faithful.

She says *my Saviour*—1. Because Jesus is my Son. 2. Because He is also my Saviour, both because He has preserved, me above others from all sin, and filled me with all grace, and because He has made me the mediatrix of salvation for all men, so that I am as it were the cause and the mother of salvation to all who are to be saved.

S. John of Damascus, when the hand with which he had written the defence of the worship of sacred images had been cut off by Leo the Isaurian, and had been miraculously restored by the Blessed Virgin, sang the words, “My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, and in His Mother, for He that is mighty hath done to me great things.”

Ver. 48.—*For He hath regarded*, &c. S. Augustine (*super Magnificat*) says, “This is the grace of her exultation, that He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: it is as if she said, because I exult in His grace, therefore my exultation is from Him; and because I love His gifts on account of Himself, therefore I exult in Him. S. Bernard (*Serm. 57 in Cant.*) says, “God regards the earth and causes it to tremble; He regards Mary and infuses grace. He hath regarded, she says, the lowliness of His handmaiden, for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. These are not the words of one lamenting or fearing but of one rejoicing. Hence He says to her, *Arise quickly, my love, my dove, my fair one, and come away.*”

Lowliness, or low estate. Vulgate, *humilitatem*; Greek, *ταπεινωσιν*. Humility here properly means lowliness of estate, not the virtue of humility as opposed to pride, for this is called *ταπεινοφροσύνη*; for humility alone among virtues is ignorant of itself; and he who boasts of his humility is proud, not humble.

Secondly, however, by humility may be understood the virtue itself of humility; for on account of this God had regard to the Blessed Virgin, and chose her for His mother; for a humble person recognises his virtues as being the gifts of God; wherefore among them he sees also his own humility, but he ascribes it not to his own strength, but to the grace which he had received from God.

As, therefore, the Blessed Virgin here recognises her election to be the Mother of

God (which was a far greater thing), so likewise she recognises that she was fittingly adorned for so great a dignity by her humility, virginity, and other virtues which had been imparted to her by God. For a humble person recognises his own, low estate, his misery, his poverty, yea, even his own nothingness, and ascribes all that he is and has to God, Whose he is, and says with the Psalmist, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give the glory.*

Listen to S. Augustine (*Serm. 2 de Assump.*), “O true humility which hath borne God to men, hath given life to mortals, made new heavens, and a pure earth, and given liberty to the souls of men. The humility of Mary was made the heavenly ladder by which God came down to earth. For what does *regarded* mean but approved? For many seem in the sight of men to be humble, but their humility is not regarded by the Lord. For if they were truly humble, then they would not wish to be praised by men, and their spirit would not rejoice in the world but in God.” And S. Chrysostom (*Hom. 2 in Ps. 50*) says, “The greatest sacrifice of all is humility, for the same man who by sinning has separated himself from God, subjects himself to Him by humility, when he is converted to penitence.” And lastly S. Bernard says, “It is humility which truth begets for us, and it has not heat, and it is humility which love forms and inflames. The latter consists in affection, the former in knowledge: by the former we learn that we are nothing, and we learn it from ourselves and our own weakness; by the latter we tread underfoot the glory of the world, and we learn it from Him Who emptied Himself, and Who, when men sought to make Him a king, fled; but when He was sought for reproaches and for the Cross, He did not flee, but offered Himself willingly.” The Blessed Virgin had both these (humility and love) in an eminent and heroic degree.

For behold from henceforth, &c. S. Augustine says here, “Thou, O Elizabeth, sayest concerning me, *Blessed art thou who believedst*; but I say, *From this time* (when I conceived the Son of God) *all generations shall call me blessed*. Mary, who was humble before God, and lowly before men on account of God, obtained witness that she was regarded in both respects: for both her humility before God was acceptable, and her low estate before men was changed into glory. Wherefore it follows, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

Blessed. Gerson (*super. Magnificat*) says, “Thou art worthy of our praises, O Holy Virgin, thrice and four times blessed. Blessed—1. because thou didst believe. 2. Because thou art full of grace, according to the salutation of Gabriel. 3. Because Blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 4. Because He, that is mighty hath done to thee great things. 5. Because thou art the Mother of the Lord. 6. Because thou art fruitful and yet retainest the honour of virginity. 7. Because thou seemest to have none like thee, among those that were before thee, or among those that come after.”