

THE MAGNIFICAT

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes – *note fifth page re opening activity, you may want multiple copies*
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

OPENING ACTIVITY: DRAMA IN NAZARETH

As the teens arrive have them clear a space in the room to act out a skit. They will be acting out the narrative of the annunciation from Luke 1:26-56. (The text is provided on page five and omits the canticle, which will be discussed in today's lesson. The opening activity will help provide context for that discussion.) The suggested roles for this activity will work differently depending on your group size; see the suggestions below. Assign roles, distribute the text, allow a few moments for coordination, and – action!

- For groups of one or two, assign only a narrator and an actor, playing one of the roles yourself if need be. The narrator reads – and mimes – all of the narration, and the actor reads *expressively* everything in quotations.
- For groups of three or four, you can assign different actors for each of the parts with lines: Mary, the angel Gabriel, and Elizabeth, plus the narrator. Each one's task is to both read expressively and mime or act out the parts related to their character (or in the case of the narrator, use gestures to illustrate).
- For groups of five to eight, divide those four parts (narrator, Mary, Gabriel and Elizabeth) into speakers and actors. So the speaking narrator reads the parts while the acting narrator mimes them. In the case of the characters, the speaking character reads the lines while the acting character acts them out.
- For groups of more than eight, split the group and have each team perform for the other(s).

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: THE FUTURE WE WANT

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- What are some goals that you, your friends, or other young people you know, have for their future lives?
- Have you ever met anyone who had totally counter-cultural goals? What sorts of goals did they have?
- Before the angel Gabriel visited Mary, what kinds of things do you think she might have wanted for her future?

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A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *People often want similar things from life, usually with the ultimate goal of being happy. They may want to be rich or successful, to marry and have children, to be admired and valued for the way they look or the work that they do. Perhaps they want to go to a certain school, have a certain kind of job or home, nice clothing, cars, to enjoy life by traveling and going to parties, etc.*
- *If your teens have never met anyone counter-cultural, this may be a good place for a personal anecdote. Every now and then we happen upon someone who is more focused on trying to change the world for the better or trying to serve a cause they believe in, than they are on pursuing their own happiness. You may want to challenge your group to consider whether pursuing happiness leads to happiness, and whether pursuing something meaningful might actually lead to greater happiness.*
- *Mary's early life goals are hypothetical, so allow them some license. She may have been an ordinary girl who dreamed of the same things that they dream of, but she may also have been a bit counter-cultural even then. We can tell from the way she responds to the situation that she trusted God and rejoiced at the unexpected bend that had suddenly appeared in her road.*

THE LESSON: THE MAGNIFICAT

The first part of the lesson provides a bit of context for the Magnificat (our lesson text) which can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

The Old Testament tells us the story of all that has gone wrong with humanity, and of God's loving promise to one day send a Saviour. When the New Testament story in Luke's Gospel opens, there is no chance of missing the fact that something epic is going on. In the first two chapters of Luke, three people – not to mention the choir of angels – burst into song when they catch a glimpse of what God is doing.

These songs are called canticles, and if we pray with the BCP, then we will recognize them from Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline. Today we're going to look at the Song of Mary, also called the Magnificat (which comes from the Latin for "My soul magnifies", the first words of the song).

By the time we get to Mary's canticle, a lot has happened to this young lady. She is betrothed to be married. She has met an angel. She is pregnant by the Holy Spirit and the Son she will have is going to be the promised Messiah. She rushes off to visit her relatives Zechariah and Elizabeth and is greeted with a wonderful affirmation of all that she has experienced and is about to experience. Luke's Gospel doesn't tell us what difficulties Mary faced, so we can only guess. But it does tell us that meeting the angel was frightening, and the news she received was bewildering. Her whole life was about to change.

Christians over the centuries have had a special regard for Mary because of the unique role that was given to her and because of the amazing example she sets for all believers.

As we read through her song, pay special attention to how she sees herself, and to how she sees God, as well as to her perspective on the whole situation.

Refer to Luke 1:46-55.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE OR THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, PAGE 21).

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Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What does the text tell us about how Mary sees herself?
- What does it tell us about how she sees God?
- How would you describe her attitude?
- How would your reactions and attitudes be similar or different?
- What do you think we can learn from Mary?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Mary’s canticle suggests she sees herself as humble (v 48, 52) and poor (v53), but devout (v50), and now unspeakably blessed (v48).*
- *She describes God as mighty (v 49), holy (v49), merciful (v50), and strong (v 51), keeping his promises (v 54-55).*
- *Mary’s reaction to the situation is adoration (v46) and rejoicing (v47).*
- *We can learn a great deal from Mary’s example, including to remember what God is like, and who we are before him, and to be grateful for the blessings – even strange ones! – that he brings to our lives. We can learn to trust him, to raise our gaze to see the larger picture that we are a part of, and to appreciate the honour of the role we have been given to play in his story, however small.*
- *Did your teens notice the phrases “scattering the proud”, “bringing down the mighty”, and “sending the rich empty away”? Throughout scripture, God shows a special concern for those who are poor and needy, and a righteous anger against those who oppress the vulnerable. Unlike many human rulers, God isn’t biased in favour of the rich and powerful. Instead, he is the champion of those who place their trust in him, no matter what their circumstances are. God did not send Jesus to be born into a household of privilege, but gave this role of honour to a humble and poor young woman.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Spend some time with Mary’s response to the angel Gabriel: “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word”. Rephrase it in your own words as a prayer. (For example, “I am your servant, whatever your will is for me, my answer is yes”.) Then, spend some time praying through your own hopes and dreams for the future, offering them to God by closing with your paraphrase of Mary’s words.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

O God Most High, who didst endue with wonderful virtue and grace the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord: Grant that we, who now call her blessed, may be made very members of the heavenly family of him

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who was pleased to be called the firstborn among many brethren; who livest and reignest with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

(COLLECT FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, BCP PAGE 309)

622 (AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

LUKE 1: **HUMILITY AND JOY**

⁴⁶“My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, ⁴⁸for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵²he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

OPENING ACTIVITY: LUKE 1:26-46, 56

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, *"Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"* But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

And Mary said to the angel, *"How will this be, since I am a virgin?"*

And the angel answered her, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."* And Mary said, *"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."* And the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."*

And Mary said *THE MAGNIFICAT!* ...And she remained with Elizabeth about three months and returned to her home.