

August 15, 2010  
Mary, Mother of Our Lord  
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Most days I don't even need an iPod. I have a constant playlist running through my head, anyway. Lately my playlist is filled with songs from Vacation Bible School:

- I am the church. You are the church. We are the church together. All who follow Jesus, all around the world, yes we're the church together.
- Ho, Ho Ho Hosanna! Ha Ha Ha-leluia!
- Shalom my friend, Shalom my friend.
- We are marching in the light of God.
- Jesus loves me

I think you get the idea. I keep singing these songs over and over again, in my head and sometimes even out loud. And so do my kids. And hopefully all the participants in VBS will sing these and other songs, which shape and influence our growing faith.

It doesn't happen too much anymore that people sing together; at least not in American culture. Travel and live among many people of the world and you'll hear and participate in a lot of community singing. But here in the U.S., most people listen to other people sing—leaving it to the professionals. Occasionally groups of people sing together—at the ball park for the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch, at camp around the fire, or at a neighborhood block party as we did yesterday (But that's only because children were involved.)

Yet, worship remains the one place you can count on community singing. A friend told me yesterday that she is most spiritually fed when a group of people is singing together, not necessarily a church song (she's Jewish) but any song where people sing, smile, and participate in making music together. She said it feeds her soul and makes her spirit feel alive.

There are many reasons why some of us don't sing. Maybe we don't know the tune or we think we can't carry one. Perhaps we can't read music. Or our hearts simply aren't in it.

Today's gospel reminds us that Mary's heart was full of song. Maybe singing made her spirit feel alive as well. In today's scripture reading she meets her cousin Elizabeth, who calls her blessed among women. Mary responds with praise to God *and* prophetic statements—that God has raised up the lowly, sent the rich away empty, and scattered the proud. Most of us can easily imagine the young mother singing a sweet lullaby to the infant Jesus. But this song is a radical song of God's work, a song of proclamation, a song of revolution.

Mary sings of God's greatness. She teaches us to praise the Holy One, even when the answers are not clear or when the pain seems unbearable. Mary is the strong woman who sings of God's justice for the lowly and all who know their need for God. Mary sings this song of radical transformation and revolution while Jesus grows in her womb. Just imagine the songs she sang to him as an infant. A lullaby to soothe when he cried and fussed, of course. But also songs of God's justice and mercy. Songs filled with hope for those who are least in the eyes of the world.

What would Mary teach us to sing today as we deal with racism and hate crimes, a widening gap between rich and poor, a world marked with fear and greed? What would she teach us to sing in the midst of uncertainty, challenge and change? She would teach us to proclaim *God's* greatness. That the Holy One looks with favor on you and me. That in baptism we are blessed from generation to generation. That the mighty are cast down from their thrones and the proud ones are scattered in the imagination of their hearts. That the hungry will be filled with good things.

Mary gives us a song to *sing*, not a song to listen to from afar. We are emboldened to join in the song; to become the song of justice and mercy. For we, like Mary, are God-bearers too. Can you sing with Mary? Even when your heart is breaking? Even when the problems of life seem overwhelming? Even if there is no music in your soul this morning, the song of community will carry you.

Because that is the beauty of coming together in this space, not only to *hear* the Word, but to *sing* it. To have others singing around you and with you and for you. So that together our faith can be shaped by songs of revolution, songs of God's boundless mercy and transformative love, songs of hope and freedom, songs that unite and empower us in faith.

Singing in worship, or Sunday School, or gathered around a table for a potluck dinner, helps us to create a Faith Songs Playlist that is accessible throughout all our days of joy and suffering . When a new baby is baptized we sing "You have put on Christ" and with joy we remember that we have done so too. When we sing "Thank the Lord and sing God's praise tell everyone what God has done!" we are emboldened to go forth from this place and do it—tell how God has blessed us. Whether its songs we sing today or any other days of our gathering, let them be what empowers you to move forward throughout the week.

So what's on your Faith Songs Playlist? Is there a top ten list that can run through your mind this week, as you work and play with friends, colleagues, family? Mine includes,

You have put on Christ, in him you have been baptized.

Mothering God, you gave me birth...

And in our living and in our dying, we belong to God. We belong to God.

And especially this day, when we honor and celebrate Mary I'll be downloading to my hard drive (point to head)

My soul proclaims your greatness O Lord, my spirit rejoices in you. You have looked with love on your servant here and blessed me all my life through.