

Maronite Monks of Adoration

Most Holy Trinity Monastery ❖ Petersham MA 01366-9725

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Blessed be Mary

Come, let us say:

“Blessed be Mary”—

*the impoverished one,
who grew rich in the Son of the Lord!*

*Great is her blessedness,
and glorious is her memory!*

*Let all peoples
make great her praises!*

*Mary herself said:
“All generations will call me blessed
on account of the One whom I bear.”*

*Let us call her blessed
as she has invited us,
for truly this is a debt
for the discerning.*



The Maronite Church has a deep love for the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is especially evident in her very rich patrimony of prayers and hymns that has come down to us from of old.

One of my favorite hymns is "*Taw Neemar*" ("Come, let us say"), which is presented on the first page of this newsletter. The translation is our own: a simple prose translation that tries to capture the meaning of the original Syriac. Let us take a little closer look at this beautiful hymn.

Maronite hymns love to draw us closer to the Holy Scriptures. Sometimes a phrase from the Bible (whether New Testament or Old) is incorporated into the hymn, or even just a word or an image. The composers of these hymns knew the Holy Scriptures very well and desired that the singers of these hymns also know the Holy Scriptures very well. If we do not recognize the biblical reference in a particular hymn, we should take it as a challenge to learn the Bible better. I have found that a little work with the Bible and a Bible Concordance (that is, a reference book that cites every word in the Bible) can yield a rich harvest!

What about this hymn before us? What is its scriptural foundation? Nothing less than Our Lady's own words of the *Magnificat* recorded by St. Luke in the first chapter of his Gospel, particularly verse 48: "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (IB). As we will see, this hymn is a meditation on this one verse

of Holy Scripture—a meditation that seeks to make this Word of God a reality in our lives.

Right from the beginning the hymn draws us in—"Come, let us say"—and puts on our lips these words, "*Blessed be Mary.*" We ourselves, the singers of this hymn, call Mary blessed.

But then we are startled—"the impoverished one." Do we call the impoverished blessed? Indeed, Mary was materially poor. She had nothing of her own that would inspire anyone to call her blessed. Of course, the Syriac word can also be translated "barren one." In Mary's case this would be in reference to her childlessness as a result of her virginity. Even so, as we learn from the Gospel story of Mary's cousin Elizabeth, childlessness at that time was not considered blessedness. (A far cry from modern thought!)

So why is Mary called blessed? The answer is quick to come—"who grew rich in the Son of the Lord." While remaining a virgin, Mary had a child, the very Son of the Lord! This is her wealth and the source of her blessedness. Recognizing this blessedness of hers, we exclaim—"Great is her blessedness, and glorious is her memory!" Then we invite all peoples to recognize her blessedness as well and sing her praises—"Let all peoples make great her praises!"

Mary herself realized her blessedness, and we proclaim her very words—*“Mary herself said: All generations will call me blessed.”* This is the 28th verse from the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke. Moreover, Mary herself knew the reason for her blessedness—*“on account of the One whom I bear”*—the child Jesus. This is but a summation of Our Lady’s *Magnificat*.

We urge ourselves to call Mary blessed again and again —*“Let us call her blessed.”* We do this in accord with the words of Mary —*“as she has invited us”*—that all generations call her blessed.

The hymn ends with a wondrous line—*“for truly this is a debt for the discerning.”* A wondrous line, indeed! What does it mean? Who are the discerning? The discerning are those who are wise in the understanding of the Holy Scriptures; in this case, the words of our Lady’s *Magnificat* recorded in St. Luke’s Gospel. It is they who owe to Mary, the Mother of God, this praise, this calling her “blessed.”

So we see that this Syro-Maronite hymn helps us to be numbered among “the discerning” who understand the Holy Scriptures and who gladly pay their debt of praise to Mary, the Blessed, the Mother of God.✠