

Homily for the ordination on August 16th, 2009

Magnificat anima mea dominum -- Hochpreiset meine Seele den Herrn----

My soul proclaims your greatness, o God.

Mary, Mary Kay, Linda and Mary, Sisters and Brothers!

I greet you with great joy with the words of Mary, words she spoke in response to the greeting of her cousin Elizabeth. Both women are pregnant - ready to give birth to sons who would change the world.

Some of you may know that I just returned from NYC, to be with my daughter Eva who gave birth to our grandson, Cyrus Emmanuel. While I held him, I formulated many of the thoughts for this homily.

The Magnificat reminds us of a similar song in the Older Testament, the song of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Some scripture scholars believe that the Magnificat was actually spoken by Elizabeth, who like Hanna was barren for many years and praises God who brings fertility to the one who was rejected because of the dryness of her womb.

However, today, on the feast of the Assumption of Mary, I want to focus on the Mother of Jesus and share a few thoughts with all of you, but especially with the ordinands. Let us explore how Mary, our sister, may function as a role model for diaconate and priesthood. But Mary, the mother of our brother Jesus and the mother of us all, can also function as an image of God. The council of Ephesus in the fourth century declared her to be Theotokos, Mother of God. 1950 a dogma declared that she was raised into heaven with body and soul.

I began this homily with the first line of the Magnificat in Latin to show our connection as Roman Catholic Womenpriests with our roots and to emphasize our intent to remain firmly rooted in the Roman Catholic Church. I repeated the same line in German, my Mother tongue to express my own emotional connection to Mary and I am sure this early emotional connection is not foreign to many of the women of my age in this room. The German also reminds us of the roots of our movement in German speaking Europe.

You may have noticed that the English translation does not address God as dominus, as Lord. The omission of the word "Lord " shows a major shift in the consciousness of many Christians and people of other faiths. Together we have started to explore the feminine face of God. I believe the figure of Mary can help us in this exploration.

Scripture does not tell us much about her. But we know that she is not the only woman pushed into silence and into the back ground by overly assertive male leaders. We learn a little more about her in some noncanonical

scriptures of the same time the New Testament was written. But it is not much. Yet in the long history of Christianity, the people of God have prayed to her, asked for her intervention and protection, brought her gifts, crowned her, adored her. There are still countries where her images in Catholic churches are much more frequent, and times in history where she was more prominently displayed than her son.

The hierarchical male church did not always know what to do with her. They often manipulated her and made her appear to be either a powerless girl or a bloodless queen on a pedestal, far out of the reach of the average woman. Yet her connection with the people remained strong. The pilgrimages did not stop and the images of the Black Madonna, of Fatima and Lourdes, of our Lady of Guadalupe have imprinted themselves into the hearts of many generations. On a recent trip to Egypt, I saw the image of Isis with her son Horus on her lap and it became clear to me that Isis builds the connection to the Great Goddess who reigned at the time when God was a woman and that Mary whose Romanesque depictions look so similar to Isis, carries this tradition into Christianity.

Today's joyful celebration takes place on the day our church celebrates that

Mary, the young vulnerable Jewish girl was taken into heaven with her body

and her soul. The Catholic Feminist theologian, Mary Daly, critiqued Christianity with the following sentence: "That is a strange religion where the mother bows before the son". So let's imagine them all up there together, seated in equality, without competition, in peace: The Father, the Mother, the Son and Sophia.

Can we bring this image down to earth and model our church after it?

A church where we are all on in Christ Jesus.- A church where the phrase "in persona Christi" does not exclude half of the population. - A church where Mary our sister can be a role model for priesthood. After all she did say: This is my body, this is my blood and she said it at least twice: in the stable and under the cross, and no one stopped her from holding and touching Him then.

Today, I encourage our ordinands, those already ordained and all of you who live out the priesthood of all believers, to model your lives after the woman from Nazareth. Let us give birth to a priesthood like hers and respond with a resounding yes when the angel calls us. Let us take the words of the Magnificat seriously, like she did, and proclaim a God who pushes down the powerful and lifts up the poor, who feeds the hungry, who invites all without exception to her son's table. Let us stand under the

cross with her and wait with her and the community for the arrival of the Spirit. Let us give birth to a priesthood and church that not only proclaims that a woman's body was worthy to be taken into heaven, but that also acknowledges that a woman's body is worthy to stand next to the altar. Then we can truly say with her: Our souls rejoice in God, our Mother.
Amen