

Gabriel's Message.

* I hope you've enjoyed singing *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*. This beautiful carol was adapted from Basque where it was known as "Gabriel's Message." The English clergy and hymn-writer Sabine Baring-Gould (1834 – 1924) translated this carol in English. The music dates back to the 13th century and comes from the Gregorian chant *Angelus Ad Virginem*. This carol reflects on the text from (Lk 1:26-38) – "The Annunciation." However, it also associates in certain way with our text from (Luke 1:39-45). Today we focus on the second stanza of "Gabriel's Message." Significantly, even though, this stanza is the very short composition, only 22 words, it is full of teachings; indeed it bears the five concepts.

* The first concept is found in the words, "For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be," Blessings are always associated with whether they are material or spiritual things, like peace, joy of life, prosperity and so forth. Regarding Mary it is right to say that she is highly favored. She was blessed with the divine Baby; and she is already passed through Golden gate to eternal life. That is the great blessing! From Mary's earthly life up to now all generations call her blessed Mary. But how about us? Have we blessed in some respects as Mary? Some Christians may doubt that they are not highly favored because of tough time – "blood, sweat, and tears." As the sinful human beings, we are more likely feel as one's being forgotten or overlooked by God. But it is not true! Please notice, the Angel promised a Saviour, not wealth and health but salvation. From this point, to be blessed means to be saved from sin and to inherit the eternal life. To make these things possible the Savior had to come in the world, suffer the cross and die for us, or we would be not freed from the bondage of sin and satan. But in order the human race would not doubt that we are blessed with Mary, God sent to the shepherds his Angel, probably Gabriel. Unlike Mary as an exceptional one, the shepherds on the field stand for all human race. In his appearing the Angel said, "*Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for **all** the people. For unto **you** is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*" (Luk 2:9-10). Be confident, fear not and believe the angel's message. We are blessed with Mary, blessed who doesn't doubt that we are all highly favored, *God's chosen people, a holy nation, a people belonging to God called out of darkness into his wonderful light to worship and witness for him.* (1 Peter 2:9) Therefore, we are blessed as Mary.

* The second concept is within the words, "all generations laud and honor thee." It means that people of orthodox faith will acknowledge Mary as *theotokos* "God-bearer". The believers from all generations recognize Mary as the Mother of our God, Jesus Christ, according to his human nature. Lutherans accept the Third Ecumenical Council, a fifth century meeting in Ephesus (modern day Turkey) as it affirms the two non separated natures of Christ - fully divine and fully human.

The Son of God engaged with human race through Mary, and since Mary gave birth to the Son of God, she is His Mother. That is why all generations laud and honor her.

* The next concept affiliates with the words, "Thy son shall be Emmanuel." The name Emmanuel means "God with us" The Isaiah prophecy (7:14) was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Significantly, those of us who might have puzzled with the name Emmanuel reading (Matt 1:23) "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us) received its explanation in the very end of the same Gospel, the last words saying before Jesus' ascension, *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" Jesus is God in the flesh; He was literally human race, "with us." Through the Holy Spirit, Christ is present today in the life of every believer. Perhaps not even Isaiah understood how far-reaching the meaning of *Immanuel* would be.

* The forth concept reflects on the words, "most highly favored lady." It means that Mary is placed in foremost position in Christian world as "The Most Highly favored lady." God used an insignificant and humble girl to assist in the transformation of the world. She who was totally unknown became the most famous lady in the history of the world, remembered by millions for her role in the salvation the human race.

* And the fifth concept is found in the single word "Gloria." It sounds loud in the end of each verse of the carol. Here our focus shifts from Mary to God. In response to God's will on her, Mary gladly and humbly responded, *"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." If the Lord can make it happen, then, I am willing. Let it is happen to me. I am willing to be the God-bearer. Glory to God on high!* Mary is the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son, and the vessel of the Holy Spirit. Through all her life, Mary kept the words of her promise "May it be done to me according to your word." In one accord with Mary let's say, Lord, let your will be done to us according to your word. And so, it is with the whole Church, let us to say, "For yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, forever and ever.

Beloved, peace be with you.

Amen