

In the Virgin Mary's song found in our Gospel text – the Magnificat, a song we still sing to this day – God is spoken of as a God who works in ways quite different that we men might think He would. Mary sings that God humbles the proud and exalts the lowly, that He brings down those elevated in the world's eyes and raises up those who are looked down upon.

There are many different ways that the Lord has performed this in history, but in our Gospel text we see one in particular: God working through babies. That thought might seem cutesy or silly at first, but there is probably nothing better to show the way in which God elevates the lowly than in the bringing about of His good and gracious will, destroying the powers of darkness, saving our souls from damnation, through infants and children.

God has used babies throughout history to show His faithfulness to His people. This goes clear back to the Garden, and to the fall into sin right afterward. The Lord God formed Adam and Eve as the pinnacle of His creation, brought them together in the first marriage, and then told them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." Have babies, God commanded. Bring forth new life.

Here we see the family – husband, wife, and children – as God's design for humanity before the fall into sin. This is not some human invention, this is part of the creation which God made, that creation which was very good.

Yet as we all know, man didn't remain very good, but in pride rebelled against God and plunged the world into sin and death. Now, God might have then and there decided to just let Adam and Eve suffer the effects of their decision, let them die and then go get a different pile of dust and made some other people. But He didn't.

No, God promised to save them, to bring humanity back from the side of Satan and restore them to Himself. And how did He promise to do this? The offspring, the seed, of the woman – a baby! Though Adam and Eve had brought death into the world, through their offspring, God would come as a deliverer and crush the head of the serpent.

And so with every baby born, every new life brought into the world, God's promise was made visible. God's faithfulness is seen in every child born of a woman.

This continued on and on through the ages. God calls Abram out of idol worship and promises to make of him a great nation, with offspring as innumerable as the stars of heaven. But Abram and his wife Sarai don't have any children, and haven't been able to for a long time. Will these offspring come from Abram's heir, Eliezer of Damascus? Or perhaps through Hagar, Sarai's slave girl?

No, despite the fact that it's supposedly impossible, God's faithfulness to His promise will come through a baby born to Abram's ninety-year-old wife. And on this will go, with the barren Rebekah bearing Esau and Jacob, the barren Rachel bearing Joseph and Benjamin, the barren wife of Manoah bearing Samson, and the barren Hannah bearing Samuel.

God does show His power in sending plagues, splitting seas, and shaking mountains, but even more so in birth of babies. All the other mighty acts are done, not simply to show power, but to preserve that line of Abraham. Through the babies of Israel, not only are patriarchs, judges, and

prophets raised up, but the promise of the coming deliverer is kept alive. With every cry of new life coming from the womb, God shows faithfulness to His people.

In addition to God's faithfulness, God's love is also shown in these babies. God looked on the sadness of those barren mothers in the Bible and granted them the blessing of children.

God heard the prayers of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and in love for them sent them a son. The fulfillment of this happened no doubt long after the two had quit praying for a baby, because it was by that point impossible, but God's might, driven by His love, once again brought about the "impossible."

That baby, John the Baptist, would be a source of joy and gladness for Zechariah and Elizabeth. John would also be the first to recognize and confess the presence of an even greater baby when both babies were still in their mother's wombs.

That other baby is of course Jesus, the Word made flesh. He is the love of God come down to earth. He is the Almighty God, the Lord of Creation, who in love humbled Himself and became a baby in Mary's womb. At the time John leaps for joy in Elizabeth's womb, Jesus is tiny, maybe the size of a poppy seed, and yet that incredibly small person is God Himself.

What amazing love that the Lord God would come in such a meek and lowly way! Should He have come directly to earth, blazing in glory like on top of Mount Sinai or as St. John sees Him in the Revelation, we would have cowered in fear and dared not to approach Him, likely trembling at His words and fainting at His sight. But He comes to lowly virgin betrothed to a poor carpenter, that none might flee from His presence.

He comes as a baby that He might perform His promised work of love and deliver us. He takes on flesh and blood so that He can do what an otherwise immortal God cannot do, namely die.

As He is born, grows up, and walks this earth, He will share in the suffering of our life. He will face all our temptations as a man. He will endure the sadness and grief which we experience. And finally, He will go to the cross to shed that blood which He first had in the womb of the virgin Mary.

He has no sin of His own, He deserves none of it, but out of love He bears all our iniquities in His body on the tree. Though John could only leap for joy at the time of our Gospel reading, he would later point to Jesus and proclaim to all who heard that there is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus is there in Mary's womb because of His love for the whole world.

That great love will continue to be shown in babies in all the ages since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God continues to show faithfulness to the promise He made to Abraham, still adding more and more children to His family, brought in as He blesses all nations through that promised Seed.

These new sons and daughters are brought in through the waters of Holy Baptism, being born of water and the Spirit, as Jesus tells Nicodemus. Any thoughts that a child can't believe in Jesus must be rejected, as the Bible shows that even unborn babies like John the Baptist can and do have faith.

In fact, John's example is a wonderful encouragement for expectant mothers, for if John can hear the greeting of Mary while he's in Elizabeth's womb and be given faith, how much more can the

unborn children of Christian mothers hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is read and preached? Even the tiniest, microscopic baby is a creation of the faithful and loving God, and God speaks even to those whom we might consider unable to hear. God does the impossible.

God speaking to those unable to hear is also seen as He brings older children and adults into His household. Apart from God, we are dead in our sins, unable to enter the Kingdom of God on our own.

Our sinful flesh cannot truly hear the Gospel, believe those words on its own. Sin causes this spiritual birth defect, that we cannot hear the things of God. And so, Jesus causes us to be born as new spiritual babies with working spiritual ears.

This doesn't happen by entering the physical womb a second time, as Nicodemus puzzles, but by the Holy Spirit bringing about a new life even in those who are older. The birth of water and Spirit, the new life granted by the Word, makes us all to be born as babies in God's household.

The Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and grants us a child-like faith, the love and trust that a baby has for his mother and father. Just like a baby is completely dependent on his parents, so too are we Christians completely dependent on our Heavenly Father, who gives us every good and perfect gift, providing for all our needs of body and soul, defending us from both physical danger and the assaults of the evil one.

That evil one, Satan, hates God, hates us, and hates babies. With every baby born on this planet, Satan is reminded of his failure. Every squeal makes him remember how he, the dragon of Revelation, failed to kill the child born of the woman. Every coo brings to his attention his utter inability to thwart the will of God or undo God's promises. Every cry recalls of the One who cried out from the cross, "It is finished!," crushing his serpent head into the dust.

Satan strives night and day to murder the unborn and torment the children, because they remind him of the Divine Child born of Mary. He uses all his lies and deceit to bring this about.

He tells all sorts of lies to mothers, that it's not a baby but a blob of tissue, that it's likely to suffer and so better to just end it now, that they need to wait until later so they can focus on their education or career.

He tells lies to fathers, that a quick visit to a clinic or a pharmacy will solve the problems of their unchastity, that because they don't carry the child they shouldn't care what happens to it.

He tells lies to society, that children are better off dead than poor or unwanted, or that because the babies and their mothers are victims of crime that the solution is to kill the baby, or that abortion is healthcare and not a work of the devil, as even the Satanic Temple admits.

Satan is the father of lies, and he'll say whatever he can in an effort to bring children out of the household of God and into the abyss with him.

For the sake of those babies, unborn and born, young and old, we the Church must speak. We speak the truth of God's holy Word against the lies of the devil.

When mothers would be tempted to think of their baby as an inconvenience, we speak and tell them that the Lord of all chose to be born to a young woman in inconvenient and seemingly scandalous circumstances.

When fathers would be tempted to run from the consequences of their actions, we speak and remind them of faithful Joseph, who raised a child not his own in a situation no one would have believed.

When our government would justify the murder of the unborn, we speak and say that the same God who judged Pharaoh for drowning the Hebrew babies in the Nile and who judged Herod for murdering the children of Bethlehem will not ignore the children of our own land, whom the government is charged by God with protecting.

It may seem like a futile effort, but it is far from that, for again, nothing is impossible with God. With every baby we see and hear, every child crying in church or squawking in the restaurant or jabbering in the checkout line at the grocery store, there we have a picture of God's faithfulness and love.

God Himself came to be with us as a baby, showing strength with His arm by taking on the arms of an infant, bringing the mighty down from their thrones by placing Himself in a manger, filling the hungry with good things even as His cried out for His mother's milk. We sing with Mary and rejoice in God our Savior, even the Savior who was at that time an unborn baby.

In the name of Jesus, amen.