

A Prayer Service Honoring
Dionysia of Melitene
Celebrate Dionysia on January 20 or at any other time.

Create an altar with a vessel of water at its centerpiece

Opening Song: *Eye Has Not Seen* (Marty Haugen, 1982, GIA Publications, Inc.)
God of Day and God of Darkness (Marty Haugen, 1985, GIA Publications, Inc.)

Welcome and Opening Prayer:

Leader:

Welcome! We gather to celebrate the life of Dionysia, a life marked by profound and painful yearning, by sudden reversals both joyful and sorrowful, and by responding deeply to God's call to liberating ministry within her community.

O God, we yearn! To know your Presence in times of darkness. To experience your tender Love. To hear your Word when none other rings true. Let your justice and mercy rain down like water. O God, we yearn!

Psalm 30

Antiphon (All): Like the deer that yearns for flowing streams, so my soul is longing for you, my God.

Side 1: I will praise you, O God, you have rescued me and have not let evil triumph over me.

O God, I cried to you for help
and you have healed me.

You have raised my soul from the dead,
restored me to life from among
those gone down to the grave

Side 2: We sing praises to you, we your people, and give thanks to your holy name.

For your anger lasts but a moment,
your favors for a lifetime.

At night there may be weeping,
but joy comes with the morning

Side 1: I said to myself in my prosperity, - "Nothing will ever disturb me."

By your favor, O God,
you have made me strong as a mountain;
when you hide your face, I am dismayed

Side 2: O God, to you I cried,
to you I make supplication;
"What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the grave?
Can dust praise you, or tell of your
faithfulness?"

All: Glory to you, Source of All Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit

Introduction to the Reading:

Leader:

Dionysia stands in a long lineage of women whose experience of sudden reversal leads to creative partnership with God and ever deepening discipleship and service to their community. We recall specifically our matriarchs, Sarah and Hannah and our first disciples, Elizabeth and Mary. Today, we listen to Elizabeth Johnson's study of Mary and Elizabeth's meeting in the Gospel of Luke in her book *Dangerous Memories*.

Reading:

...Elizabeth's exuberant praise shouted with unrestrained joy joins Mary to solidarity with a long heritage of women whose creative action, undertaken in the power of the Spirit, brings liberation in God's name. Moreover, this blessing weds her historic pregnancy to her faith, again depicting her as someone who hears the word of God and acts upon it even in her own body. A Spirit-filled woman, she exudes blessings on others. What emerges with undoubted clarity from their interaction is women's ability to interpret God's word for other women.

Mary's song is the prayer of a poor woman. She proclaims God's great news with her whole being because the Holy One of Israel, regarding her low estate, has done great things for her. The term for lowliness, *tapeinōsis* in Greek, describes misery, pain, persecution and oppression.The approach of the reign of God will disturb the order of the world run by the arrogant, the hard of heart, the oppressor. Through God's action, the social hierarchy of wealth and poverty, power and subjugation, is to be turned upside down. Jubilation breaks out as the proud are scattered and the mighty are pulled from their thrones while the lowly are exalted and mercy in the form of food fills the bellies of the hungry. All will be well and all manner of thing will be well, because God's mercy, pledged in covenant love, is faithful through every generation.

Reflection: *Questions for group reflection:*

What are your deepest yearnings for yourself, for your church, for our society and our world?

Have you experienced a sudden reversal in life? How did it impact your understanding of God and of your faith?

How are you called into service for the reign of God? How are we called as a people of God?

Canticle of Mary

Side 1: My Soul proclaims your greatness, O my God, and my spirit has rejoiced in you, My Savior,

Side 2: For your regard has blessed me,
poor, and a serving woman.

Side 1: From this day all generations
will call me blessed,

Side 2 For you who are mighty, have made me great. Most Holy be your Name.

Side 1: Your mercy is on those who fear you
throughout all generations.

Side 2: You have shown strength with your arm,
You have scattered the proud in their hearts' fantasy.

Side 1: You have put down the mighty from their seat, and have lifted up the powerless.

Side 2: You have filled the hungry with good things, and have sent the rich away empty.

Side 1: You, remembering your mercy,

have helped your people Israel,

Side 2: As you promised Abraham and Sarah.
Mercy to their children, forever.

All: Glory to you, Source of All Being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit.

Closing Prayer and Sprinkling Rite

Leader: God's love and mercy rains down like dew upon the grass! Go forth to love and serve the our God!

All: Thanks be to God!

Closing Song: Canticle of the Turning (*Rory Cooney, 1990, GIA Publications, Inc.*)

This prayer service was created by Karen Flotte. Like most women, Karen balances many roles including mother and wife, consultant, writer and theologian. Her passion for justice and for women's empowerment infuses her work. She holds a M.A. from Aquinas Institute of Theology and served as Executive Director of Mary's Pence for 7 years.

Psalm, Canticle of Mary, Antiphon and Glory Be from *Companion to the Breviary, The Liturgy of the Hours with Inclusive Language*, Carmelites of Indianapolis, 1999.

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