

## **Magnificat & Spiritual Motherhood of Priests**

Kathleen Beckman, CST Advisory Team Member

Over the span of Magnificat's 33 years of ministry to Catholic women, an amazing development has occurred and it is a mighty work of the Holy Spirit in our midst! I recall when the CST diligently reviewed our leaders Handbook to update it with *wisdom* learned during the first generation of Magnificat. With joy we realized it was necessary to acknowledge a Magnificat charism related to the spiritual maternity of priests. That is why a new 5<sup>th</sup> Magnificat objective was added to the Handbook (C-5): "Imitate Mary through the spiritual adoption of priests and seminarians."

Since 1981, thousands of women continue to say yes to leadership in Magnificat and thousands more women are enjoying the experience of Magnificat gatherings. In the midst of this, the Holy Spirit brought about something unexpected: many priests were also coming to Magnificat meals, prayer groups, events, and they experienced interior renewal in their priesthood!

For example, recently, when I spoke at the Walker, MN chapter 5 priests were present. At the end of my testimony all 5 priests eagerly received the prayers of all the Magnificat women. After the blessing, one priest responded, "This has been life changing for my priesthood!" I've had the privilege of visiting many Magnificat chapters as the invited speaker when priests begin to share their ardent appreciation for Magnificat. They are edified by our authentic Marian character and femininity. A priest at the Aruba Magnificat meal told me, "Magnificat women are alive and they help my priesthood to be alive!" This is what Mary did for the first Apostles in the Church after Pentecost.

There were inklings that Magnificat would have a significant impact on the interior renewal of priests. Fr. Hal Cohen, Fr. Kevin Scallon and Sister Briege had prophetic hints of this. In 2007, Marilyn Quirk gave several Magnificat leaders the Congregation for the Clergy's 1<sup>st</sup> booklet, *Eucharistic Adoration for the Sanctification of Priests and Spiritual Maternity*. A bishop once wrote to CST imploring the help of Magnificat leaders to promote more vocations to the priesthood. Fr. Kevin's prayer card for priests spread throughout Magnificat.

What is the Lord saying to Magnificat women by this sign that connects us to the interior renewal of priests? Let us reflect: Magnificat is based on Mary's hymn of praise (Luke 1:46-55), and we perpetuate the Visitation scene (Luke 1:39-45). Magnificat came forth for "such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). This *hour* in the history of the Church can be considered a *Magnificat hour* in light of the closing message of the Second Vatican Council: "...at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do much to aid mankind in not falling...." (Dec. 8, 1965).

Magnificat women are called to fulfill a mission in and for the broader Church. We have specific *Martha* work that requires various action, planning and execution for Magnificat meals, prayer groups and events. We have the *Marian* work of sitting at the feet of Jesus, cultivating an interior life of prayer that includes Eucharistic Adoration, intercessory and travailing prayer, the offering up of sorrow and suffering in union with Christ's, interiorizing the mysteries of the Rosary, and allowing the Word of God to become spiritually impregnated within us.

The active and contemplative formation of Magnificat women is the sanctifying work of the Spirit for our transformation into *other Marys*. Mary is the icon of spiritual motherhood of priests. Of course Mary wants to include us in this maternal work of hers. Her first love and service is to her Priest Son and to all priests according to what Jesus said, "Woman, behold your son." Now, John the beloved Evangelist is also her Jesus, her priest son.

St. Edith Stein describes spiritual motherhood:

The *intrinsic value of woman* consists essentially in *exceptional receptivity for God's work in the soul*. For an understanding of our unique feminine nature, let us look to the pure love and spiritual maternity of Mary. This spiritual maternity is the core of a woman's soul. Wherever a woman functions authentically in this spirit of maternal pure love, Mary collaborates with her. This holds true whether the woman is married or single, professional or domestic or both, a Religious in the world or in the convent. Through this love, a woman is God's special weapon in His fight against evil. Her intrinsic value is that she is able

to do so because she has a special susceptibility for the works of God in souls — her own and others. She relates to others in His spirit of love.

How does this fit into our Magnificat mission? We are Mary's little army of receptivity for God's work. Mary is God's humble servant and immaculate woman whose heel crushes the head of the evil serpent. If we become *other Marys*, we can be God's special weapon and vessel also. This relates to spiritual maternity of priests because priests are on the frontlines of the spiritual battle and Mary's little army is their spiritual support.

Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M. Cap., who has served as the Preacher to the Papal Household since 1980, once gave a prophetic commission to Magnificat women at the Grapevine, Texas Chapter: "Go and be an apostle to the Apostles." He perceives a present movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church:

It is true that laypeople contribute to the support of the clergy, but their contribution to the kingdom and to the priests should not stop there. The Lord today is calling the faithful in ever-growing numbers to pray, to offer sacrifices, in order to have holy priests. A concern, a passion, for holy priests has spread as a sign of the times throughout today's Church. The royal and universal priesthood of believers has found a new way of expressing itself: contributing to the sanctification of ministerial priesthood. This vocation is becoming widespread, a call that God addresses to many. Through prayer, people are supporting the proclamation of the word and increasing its effectiveness and its fruitfulness. I share with you my time, my study, and the understanding that I acquired from the treasure house of the Church, but others, who are unknown, have contributed the most precious thing: **prayer and suffering.** (*Sober Intoxication of the Spirit, Part II*)

Fr. Cantalamessa chooses powerful words here: *A concern, a passion, for holy priests has spread as a sign of the times throughout today's Church.*

For Magnificat women, praying for priests is not an option; it is a holy duty and divine mandate. Many are already living out this charism. But, in 2012 the Congregation for the Clergy re-issued a booklet that *implored more women* to live the charism of spiritual motherhood of priests. Becoming aware of this new plea, I wrote a letter to the Cardinal Prefect of Rome's Congregation for the Clergy. In his reciprocal letter (received on May 31, 2013, *Feast of the Visitation*) the Cardinal encouraged my proposal to make their spiritual motherhood initiative fruitful as possible. He provided a Vatican protocol number and blessing for a book, an apostolate of prayer for priests, and a global media campaign. I believe this is living out our 5<sup>th</sup> Magnificat objective; and we are all invited to engage.

May the following words of Jesus to Ven. Conchita stir us all to action and open our hearts to the workings of divine grace in our midst.

*The Holy Spirit is He who blows, and moves hearts, and lifts them from the earth, and carries them to celestial horizons, and communicates to them the thirst for the glory of God. He is the one who will give them His light and His fire for inflaming the entire earth. Thus I want priests, possessed of the Holy Spirit and forgetful of themselves, all for God, all for souls.*

*Let them ask for this reaction, this new Pentecost, for my Church needs holy priests through the Holy Spirit.*

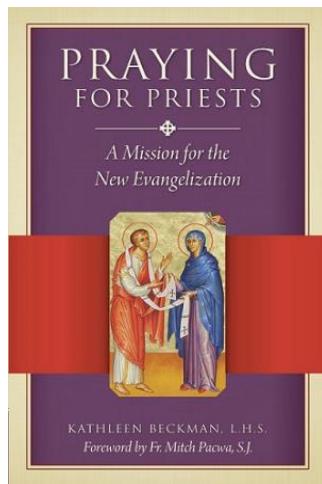
*The world collapses, because faithful priests are lacking who would draw it out of the abyss in which it finds itself; priests of light who would illuminate the paths of goodness; pure priests who would rescue so many hearts from the mire; priests on fire who would fill up the whole universe with divine love.*

*Ask, cry out to heaven, offer the Word so that all things may be restored in me, through the Holy Spirit, and through Mary.*

To learn more about new ways to intercede for the sanctification of priests visit: [www.foundationforpriests.org](http://www.foundationforpriests.org). This article has excerpts from the book, *Praying for Priests: A Mission for the New Evangelization* by Sophia Institute Press: (<http://www.sophiainstitute.com/landing/praying-priests/>)

## Marilyn Quirk's Book Review

*Praying for Priests: A Mission for the New Evangelization*  
Author: Kathleen Beckman, CST Advisory Team Member



This book is a treasure! It inspires and teaches us the way of spiritual motherhood through Scripture, the Church's teachings, the saints, and personal testimony. All of us who love the Church recognize how desperately we need the New Evangelization, and the ministerial priesthood is at the front line of the battlefield. Kathleen's book has been inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit for these times and will help all of us respond in a spirit of love, prayer, and sacrifice which will bring about a new fervor in our own spiritual lives that will radiate out to our beloved priests. —**Marilyn Quirk**, Founding Coordinator of Magnificat, A Ministry to Catholic Women and recipient of the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* award.