

It's difficult for us to imagine that our actions have cosmic consequences, that what is playing out on earth in each of our small circumscribed worlds is significant of a mighty battle that is going on in the heavens, and vice versa. The book of the Apocalypse is an attempt to penetrate the veil between heaven and earth, to give our lives something of this cosmic significance. It is mysterious language which can at first seem to increase the disparity between heaven and earth. It consists of shocking imagery which we now dismiss as no longer relevant to our way of thinking, to the modern mind, or we seek to tame it by reducing it to a mere code – this meaning that and so on. Much harder for us to do is to let the language speak for itself, to engage the imagination as in a play rather than query each word and argument as it appears on stage. We say to ourselves: if only I can decode this, I will understand. And so we go on distancing ourselves from the experience itself – and the experience is indeed a revelation, of 'seeing through' the appearances of this world to another or, better, seeing this world in all its depths, a sudden realisation given as gift rather than achieved, of this world as it really is, bound to heaven, body and soul, everything significant of God. This perception does not come easily, it takes us into the great struggle between good and evil which today's texts highlight, the struggle which characterises all existence and visits us every day. It's a very personal struggle but it affects everything and everyone else, and could easily, if understood in this way, overwhelm us. But the veil between these two worlds is very thin, and has indeed already been torn down in Christ. Mary's Magnificat is a celebration of the great reversal this brings. Her 'yes' - without any clear understanding – opens her to the possibility of God's action in that most mundane, and yet painful of activities, the birth of a child – she has said yes to that struggle between life and death which brings also great joy and hope. It would have been easier to say no, to keep body and soul separate, but in Mary the veil is broken between heaven and earth and Christ lives this openness to God to the point of death and beyond, as does Mary too, beginning with that most mundane of activities, a visit to a friend and so it goes on: life in ordinary in which God does great things.

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