

The Implications of Mary and Her *Magnificat* for Women in Leadership Today

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Abstract

An enduring barrier to the common good is business practices that result in the economic oppression, restriction, and subjugation of women. Women and their dependents comprise the majority of the poor globally, while women remain underrepresented at high levels of leadership in business. In the so-called advanced economies, discrimination on the basis of sex and gender remains an entrenched problem. It is important for human growth and leader development that we have models and heroes who “look like us,” to be able to envision our leadership potential. However, current leadership models derive from masculine archetypes. The dearth of visible feminine leadership archetypes discourages women as we develop in business organization. Yet powerful archetypes of women leaders do exist in our Western canon, including in scripture. However, the power in these feminine archetypes in scripture has been erased as they have been interpreted by men and through masculine lenses, leaving empty, submissive shells where once powerful women lived. The few passages that remain in the scriptural canon, which show feminine aspects of divinity, power, leadership, and heroism, are mere remnants of potent feminine archetypes from our culture. But these remnants can be “re-fleshed,” like the dry bones of Ezekiel (37:1-14). One such remnant is Mary and her *Magnificat*. In this paper, I show how “re-fleshing” the remnants of the powerful feminine archetype represented by Mary, singing her canticle to Elizabeth in this passage, can be used as a source of inspiration, and as a model, for women leading today. Sources of power available in this image for leadership include the power of: a just cause; an integrated family and professional identity; throwing off the male and dominant class gazes; subverting binaries through intersectionality and claiming victimized hero status; feminine language and voice; relational, collaborative sisterhood where individual acting is encouraged; and vision for a more beautiful (business) world.