

# Mary

a mother

a poor peasant

illiterate

doing the best she could in dire circumstances  
to raise her children.

Unable to read, she could consult no texts  
on which to base her life;  
only those crumbs that fell from the lips  
of the local rabbi.

But the book of nature was open to her;  
she knew the seasons,  
how things grew,  
how precious water was,  
how food could be made,  
how days were sometimes good and sometimes bad.

She had the companionship of other village women  
and they looked out for one another as best they could.

I cannot imagine her as “A woman of spirit . . .  
embarking on the task of partnering God in the work of  
redemption.”

Those are men’s words, springing from men’s  
imagination and projects.

Her concerns were very local and very specific:  
the good of her husband and children,  
the well-being of the village,  
avoiding trouble with the Romans. . .

It was only much later,  
once Jesus was grown up,  
perhaps after he lost his wife,  
then later after he had been baptized by John  
and later still when he came home from the wilderness  
that she, he and other women  
worked out who God (*Alaha*) was for them,  
and not just for them in the village,  
but for all Galileans, even Romans,  
and not just for humans either,  
but for all the living:  
ants, birds, goats, grass, trees.  
All those alive at this moment are children of the One  
who is Mother and Father of us all (*Abwoon*).

And their thinking was so different from John's.  
The God of John's message was not their God.  
John expected God to intervene, and soon,  
and with violence,  
so that justice may be done and be seen to be done,  
so that God's kingdom would be plain to see.  
Simply repent! Wash yourselves, pass through the Jordan,  
and God will bring you to the promised land!

But Jesus and Mary and Salome knew  
that God would never come, not like that,  
never with violence, never from outside. . .  
And *Alaha's* kingdom (*malquta*) was not coming either:  
for it was already here! If only we knew it!

But although the kingdom really is here,  
it is really not here too,  
because we do not see it  
and do not welcome it into our hearts.  
But *Alaha* is very really *Emmanuel*, God-with-us,  
as close to us as the very air we breath,  
the living air (*ruha*) of Earth that surrounds us.

And it is through us, each of us, any of us,  
awake to *Alaha* as creative presence within us,  
that the kingdom in which we already live  
is made more visible, vibrant and glorious.

Maybe it was Susanna, maybe Mary, Jesus' mother,  
who said: "What is the kingdom of *Alaha* like?  
It is as if we women had a huge sack of flour  
which we all kneaded with yeast into dough.  
We let it rise, and then we baked it in our ovens,  
and the whole village and all the visitors  
had enough to eat that day.  
And there was great rejoicing because all could see

and share the abundance of the Earth, God's Earth,  
in which we were creative, just like God!"

And thus it came to be in later times that stories  
were remembered: of blind people gaining sight,  
of the walking-dead coming to life,  
of cripples beginning to walk, to run, to dance,  
and of the poor finding abundance even in destitution.

But let us remember: it was Mary and other women  
who, with Jesus, came to understand these things,  
to articulate them and to practice them,  
through the free gift of God, unexpected and unearned,  
that came to them in the breath of the present moment.

And it is our turn now to discover and explore  
the meaning of things that happened for our ancestors,  
for those who have gone before us —  
in so far as the gift is given to us,  
in so far as we are awake or awakened,  
using whatever energy we have to share in  
the creative power that drives the green shoots of life.

To Mary, to Jesus,  
to all who have gone before:  
Greetings and Thanks!

