



Bringing the Sacrifice of Praise

By Mary Floriano-Escueta

Psalm 50: 14-15 says... “Offer to God praise as your sacrifice and fulfill your vows to the Highest; Then call upon me in time of distress; I will rescue you, and you shall glorify me.” And in Hebrews 13:15, “Through him {then} let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.”

Many years ago, during one of our Nor’easter storms, I found myself in my (then) new house – watching out the sliding glass door as the wind buffeted the trees in the yard. At that time, the entire backyard was a forest, with huge trees that grew right up to the deck. The gales were so strong that they were causing the trees to bend down and touch the ground. I was alone at the time, and my husband had preceded me on a trip overseas. I was to fly out in two days to join him. I was getting more nervous with each passing moment. What if a tree fell on the house? ...What if the power got knocked out? On and on ran my fears, and the television reports only fueled my rollercoaster of anxiety.

I thought of my friend Adela, an older woman who lived by herself in a trailer home near me. I called her to check on her, thinking that her home was not nearly as solid and sturdy as mine. She answered the phone in an upbeat, sing-songy voice, and asked how I was. I mistakenly assumed she was somehow unaware of the storm outside. When I suggested she come to my house to ride out the storm, she laughed! “Oh, my dear,” she said. “Turn off the television. I am here, dancing and singing and praising the Lord. I am listening to Christian radio and praising the Lord!” Adela’s speech was heavily accented by her Puerto Rican background, and it made everything she said sound like a party – and indeed, she was truly celebrating.

She was well aware of the storm raging outside, but she had chosen, instead of focusing on what she saw with her eyes, to focus her attention on what she *knew* to be truth. Clearly, her “home” was built on the solid Rock of Christ. She convinced me to turn off the weather reports, put on some Christian music and bring God my sacrifice of praise.

She encouraged me to lift my voice to the Lord – out loud (!) – not just listening to *others* sing, but using *my* voice to make a sacrifice of thanksgiving, affirming my faith in God’s strength and power. God rest Adela’s soul, she completely changed my perspective that day, and taught me a lesson that will remain with me into eternity.

That was my first introduction to the practice of praising the Lord - Out Loud and On Purpose!! Having grown up in a large American-Italian family, with a music educator mom who used singing together as a distraction to tearing the house apart, I was accustomed to the “music” of high decibel exchanges. And despite years of voice training and choral experience, the idea of praising God and singing even when I didn’t “feel” like it – for the sole purpose of giving God honor, glory and praise – was a new concept to me.

God gives us a powerful tool to aid us in our fears and lift us up out of the darkness of uncertainty. It doesn’t matter if our voice is strong or weak, high or low, scratchy or clear, pretty or gritty - we can choose to use our God-given voice to praise the Lord and give God all the glory. “He that offers praise as a sacrifice glorifies me; and to him that goes the right way I will show the salvation of God.” (Ps 50: 23)



Mary Floriano-Escueta currently serves St. Dorothea’s Church in Eatontown, NJ. as Director of Music Ministries -where she sings, plays, conducts and directs multiple choirs. Mary also has a heart for Pastoral Care, and pre-Covid, she regularly visited senior citizen complexes to lead Communion services and encourage the residents. She sings professionally as soloist and ensemble member with *Opera by the Sea* in Bradley Beach, *A Night on Broadway*, and at various venues in the region. Mary has been married to her husband for 35 years, and is “Mom” to her two mostly-grown-up children.