At the start of every, yes every YOGATHEA® class we lift our hands overhead with an inhale. Lifting hands awakens the body. It's a basic yoga position which lengthens and strengthens throughout the upper body and feels great! Perhaps that's because it's also a posture of power, a salute.

Lifting hands is also a salute to God in the Bible, a posture of prayer. The Bible has lots of references to lifting hands, some folks believe I Timothy 2:8 to be the most relevant, trumping all other references, because it specifically instructs men to lift hands (and not the women). It starts off a controversial passage which discusses women's clothing choices and tell us all to be quiet. You can read it on your own. Being I'm a habitual wearer of yoga pants and talk as the instructor, I break most of these commands multiple times a week when I teach class to women and men. (Gasp!) Fortunately, I've come to realize that women have been breaking this command for centuries, including THE Saint Mary Mother of Jesus, that rebel!

Last week I had the pleasure to hear Dr. Ally Kateusz share about her research on the intersection of gender and religion in early Christian art. She shared about how Mary, Mother of Jesus, is a frequent art subject of these early peoples. Now, my husband's family is Catholic and my dad was Coptic so I run into the soft-smilled virgin-with-child Madonna frequently--sometimes she's white, other times she's middle-eastern brown with an ornamental halo. The statues I see of here in Indiana have her hands open below the waist, not raised. In Rome, the earliest surviving image of Mary is dated around 350AD and resides in the former home of the popes. She's standing above the alter, surrounded by the apostles as she lifts her hands and leads the men in prayer! She's wearing a pallium with red crosses which is a garment reserved for bishops and popes. Mary is breaking all the rules and wearing an ornamental robe...no baby in sight. The lifting hands Mary is hidden (wonder why?!) and Dr. Kateusz said it took her a while to find it (and then she got stuck behind the obstructing baptismal because Mass...
started, oops!). She took the time to document the obstruction in a short (and powerful) power point here:

**Two Marys: Two Traditions  from Ally Kateusz**

I like lifting hands Mary, I think of her each time I start class and awaken my body. She reminds me to say "women, lift your hands!"