

## Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle C December 20, 2009

Readings: Micah 5:1-4a; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

### Reflections on the Visitation

Our gospel passage this morning is fairly short, only five sentences long, but it is very rich. There are many themes we can reflect upon. It is hard to pick one, so I will touch on four and let you reflect further on the one that fits with what is going on in your life today.

The passage starts: *“Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.”* We can marvel at the humility and charity of Mary. She was just told by an angel that she was to be the mother of God, but she was also told by the angel that her relative Elizabeth was also with child at an old age. And so Mary forgets about the honor bestowed upon her, and about all the turmoil in her own life, and goes in haste on a difficult journey to help Elizabeth during the last months of her pregnancy. We can stop and reflect during this last week of Advent whether we recognize the needs of others and act accordingly instead of just worrying about our own problems, needs, and wants.

The passage continues: *“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’”* We can marvel on the power of the Holy Spirit to help us recognize Christ. Elizabeth and John the Baptist, who was still protected in his mother’s womb, both recognized the presence of Jesus in Mary’s womb. John leaped and Elizabeth cried out in a loud voice; they could not contain themselves. We can reflect on how we react when we are in the presence of Christ, especially when we receive Him into our own body when we come to Holy Communion. Are *we* filled with joy, or has it become something we simply take for granted? This last week of Advent, pray to the Holy Spirit that you may grow closer to Jesus and recognize His presence more fully like John and Elizabeth.

The third and fourth sentences of our passage are: *“‘And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.’”* This section of the passage offers us a very powerful pro-life message, a message about life that already exists in the womb. Elizabeth didn’t refer to Mary as a mother-to-be; she stated that Mary was the mother of her Lord, even though Mary had not yet given birth. Mary was still in her first trimester, a time when in our country the Supreme Court says a mother can have an abortion without any reason at all, and yet scripture tells us that our Lord was already present in Mary’s womb. It wasn’t a fetus who had the potential to become the Son of God and the Son of Man; it was Jesus, our Savior. And Elizabeth refers to the John as the *infant* in her womb. He wasn’t a potential infant. He was already a child capable of recognizing his Savior. When we celebrate the birth of Christ this year, reflect on the miracle of life which begins at conception, not at birth. Reflect on how maybe you take this belief for granted and too easily accept pro-choice positions. We can ask ourselves if we are doing enough to protect the unborn, the unborn like Jesus and John in our reading.

Mary made her choice and said yes; she agreed to be the mother of God. She then conceived and then there was no more choice. The time for choice occurs before conception, not after.

Our passage concludes: “***Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.***” Elizabeth compliments Mary on her great faith. Mary is a model for us of how to trust in God and how to follow His will. As we conclude Advent and celebrate Christmas, we also look to a new year and we look to our future. As we move into that future, let us listen to Jesus speaking to us. Let us grow in faith. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to have the wisdom, the faith, and the perseverance of Mary to follow God’s will for us. Remember: “***Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.***” (John 20:29)

**Deacon Joe Hulway**