

4th Sunday of Advent, Dec 22, 202

God is able to do the impossible

Mary Visits Elizabeth Luke 1:39-45: “At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

Second text: Hebrews 10:5-10: “Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll - I have come to do your will, my God.’” First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” - though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”.

Sunday Reflection

‘I have come to do your will’. This is a central teaching of the Old Testament – that God desires obedience and a right heart, not rigid compliance with the sacrificial system. Animal sacrifices could not take away sins; they only provided a temporary way to deal with ritual uncleanness until Jesus came to deal with sin permanently. His sacrifice came at a far greater cost than any Old Testament offering. Christ offered his own body on the cross for us as a sacrifice that is entirely acceptable to God. We don’t please God by keeping the laws or abstaining from sin in the new and living way. We please God by coming to him in faith to be forgiven and following him wholeheartedly. Considering Christ's immeasurable gift, we should respond by giving Him our devotion and service.

Luke tells us about two miraculous conceptions: Elizabeth was elderly and barren, while Mary was young and a virgin; they both conceived miraculously. Both events show us that nothing is impossible for God. Both are stories of absolute faith in God to fulfill his promises. In today’s gospel, Mary learns of Elizabeth’s pregnancy from the angel Gabriel; she visits and assists her cousin. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the unborn child in her womb leaped for joy. This was John the Baptist’s first prophetic action, which happened while he was still in the womb. Elizabeth was immediately filled with the Holy

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Spirit and took center stage, heaping praise on Mary, the mother of the Lord. This was no ordinary visit. God is up to something! Can we see that Mother Mary, Elizabeth, and the unborn John the Baptist are all vehicles of God's grace? Mary and Elizabeth are models of kindness and trust in God.

Mother Mary as the perfect disciple: Throughout the Bible, God's announcements of the birth of a special child were met with various responses. Sarah, Abraham's wife, laughed (Gen 18:9-15). Zecharia doubted (Luke 1:18). However, Mary graciously submitted and accepted. "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" Mary believed the angel's message and agreed to bear the child, even under humanly impossible circumstances. ***God is able to do the impossible.*** Our response to God's announcements or words should not be laughter, doubt, or disbelief, but willing acceptance because we know that God is probably up to something. Discipleship means listening to God's word and then carrying it out, like the Blessed Mother Mary. Mary, therefore, becomes not only the mother of the Savior but also the most perfect and dynamic disciple.

Advent Song:

*O come, O come Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear,
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!*

Amen.

Praying for you all, and wishing you a joy-filled Christmas celebrations.

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