Fourth Sunday of Advent (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 1:39-45): During those days 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. 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, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 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. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

"Blessed are you who believed"

Mons. Ramon MALLA i Call Emeritus Bishop of Lleida
(Lleida, Spain)

Today is the last Sunday of this time of preparation for the arrival or "Adventus" of God in Bethlehem. Because he was in every way like us, he wanted to be conceived—like any man—in the womb of a woman, the Virgin Mary, but by the work and grace of the Holy Spirit, since he was God. Soon, on Christmas Day, we will celebrate his birth with great joy.

Today's Gospel presents us with two characters, Mary and her cousin Elizabeth, who show us the attitude that must exist in our spirit to contemplate this event. It must be an attitude of faith, and of a dynamic faith.

Elizabeth, with sincere humility, "filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, 'how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'" (Lk 1:41-43). No one had told her; only faith, the Holy Spirit, had made her see that her cousin was the mother of her Lord, of God.

Knowing now Mary's attitude of total faith when the Angel announced to her that God had chosen her to be his earthly mother, Elizabeth did not hesitate to proclaim the joy that faith brings. She emphasizes this by saying: "Blessed is she who believed!" (Lk 1:45).

It is, therefore, with an attitude of faith that we must live Christmas. But, in imitation of Mary and Elizabeth, with dynamic faith. Consequently, like Elizabeth, if necessary, we must not hold back in expressing our gratitude and joy for having faith. And, like Mary, we must also manifest it with actions.

“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” (Lk 1:39-40) to congratulate her and help her, staying with her for about three months (cf. Lk 1:56).

St. Ambrose recommends that during these celebrations, “Mary's soul be in each one to magnify the Lord.” It is certain that we will not lack opportunities to share joys and help those in need.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “John leaps for joy and the spirit of Mary rejoices in her turn. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit after conceiving John, while Mary is filled with the Holy Spirit before conceiving the Lord. Elizabeth says: ‘Blessed are you because you have believed’.” (Saint Ambrose)

- “When Mary enters Elizabeth's home, her greeting is brimming with grace. At this meeting the silent protagonist is Jesus. Mary carries Him in her womb as a living Tabernacle and she offers Him to us as the most sacred gift. Wherever Mary goes Jesus is present.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Holy Mary, Mother of God: With Elizabeth we marvel, ‘and why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’ (Lk 1:43). Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: ‘Let it be to me according to your word.’ (Lk 1:38). By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: ‘Thy will be done’” Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2677)