

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"

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(Lleida, Spain)

Today, is the last Sunday before the arrival —the Advent— of God in Bethlehem. So as to be the same as us in everything, He wanted to be conceived —as any other person— in the womb of a woman, the Virgin Mary, but by the action and grace of the Holy Spirit, as He was God. Very soon, on Christmas Day, we will celebrate His birth with great joy.

The Gospel today presents us with two people, Maria and her cousin Elizabeth, who show us with their example the spiritual attitude we should have towards this event. It should be an attitude of faith, of 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). Nobody had explained anything to her. It was her faith alone, the Holy Spirit that had made her see that her cousin was the mother of her Lord, of God.

Knowing the attitude of total faith on Mary's part, when the angel announced that God had chosen her to be his earthly mother, Elizabeth is eager to proclaim the happiness and joy that faith gives. She underlines this saying: “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” (Lk 1:45).

So we must live Christmas with faith. But, like Maria and Elizabeth, with a dynamic faith. As a consequence, like Elizabeth, there is no need to hide the joy and gratitude that comes with having faith. Like Maria we have to show it with our deeds. “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”. (Lk 1:39-40) to congratulate her and to help her, staying with her for three months (cf. Lk 1:56).

Saint Ambrose recommends that, in these festive days, “We have all Maria's spirit for glorifying the Lord”. We won't lack opportunities for sharing joys and helping the needy.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“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)

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“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)

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“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, N° 2677)