

# Advent: December 19th

**Gospel text (Lk 1,5-25):** In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah, belonging to the priestly clan of Abiah. Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife, also belonged to a priestly family. Both of them were upright in the eyes of God and lived blamelessly in accordance with all the laws and commands of the Lord, but they had no child. Elizabeth could not have any and now they were both very old.

Now, while Zechariah and those with him were fulfilling their office, it fell to him by lot, according to the custom of the priests, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. At the time of offering incense all the people were praying outside; it was then that an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. On seeing the angel, Zechariah was deeply troubled and fear took hold of him. But the angel said to him, «Don't be afraid, Zechariah, be assured that your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will bring joy and gladness to you and many will rejoice at his birth. This son of yours will be great in the eyes of the Lord. Listen: he shall never drink wine or strong drink, but he will be filled with Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. Through him many of the people of Israel will turn to the Lord their God. He himself will open the way to the Lord with the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah; he will reconcile fathers and children, and lead the disobedient to wisdom and righteousness, in order to make ready for the Lord a people prepared».

Zechariah said to the angel, «How can I believe this? I am an old man and my wife is elderly, too». The angel replied, «I am Gabriel,

**who stands before God, and I am the one sent to speak to you and bring you this good news! My words will come true in their time. But you would not believe and now you will be silent and unable to speak until this has happened».**

**Meanwhile the people waited for Zechariah, and they were surprised that he delayed so long in the sanctuary. When he finally appeared, he could not speak to them and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He remained dumb and made signs to them. When his time of service was completed, Zechariah returned home and some time later Elizabeth became pregnant. For five months she kept to herself, remaining at home, and thinking, «What is the Lord doing for me! This is his time for mercy and for taking away my public disgrace».**

---

***«Don't be afraid, Zechariah, be assured that your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son»***

**Fr. Ignasi FUSTER i Camp  
(La Llagosta, Barcelona, Spain)**

**Today, the angel Gabriel announces the “supernatural” birth of John the Baptist, the man who will prepare the mission of the Messiah to the priest Zechariah. God, in His loving providence, prepares Jesus' birth along with John's. Elizabeth's sterility is not a problem. God wants to perform such a miracle because of His love for us, his creatures.**

**But Zechariah, on this occasion, does not show much supernatural faith: «How can I believe this? I am an old man and my wife is elderly, too» (Lk 1:18). He has an excessively human way of looking at things. He lacks trust in God's plans, which are always bigger than ours: in this case, nothing more than the Incarnation of the Son of God for the salvation of mankind! The angel finds an “absent-minded” Zechariah, slow in Godly matters, a bit “off the air”.**

**With Christmas being only a few days away, may the angel of the Lord find us**

ready, just as Mary was. It is necessary that we try to keep ourselves in the presence of God during the day, to intensify our love for Jesus Christ in our prayer, to receive Holy Communion with devotion: because Jesus is going to be born and come to us! We should have a supernatural outlook about all our affairs. We need such a vision in our professional work, in our studies, in our apostolate, even in our daily setbacks. Nothing escapes divine providence! With the certainty and joy of knowing that we are cooperating with the angels and the Lord in the loving, salvational plans of God.