

Fourth Sunday of Advent – Year C

Fr. Chad S. Green
Mary, Queen of Peace Catholic Church
Sammamish, Washington
19 December 2021

Micah 5:1-4a
Psalm 80
Hebrews 10:5-10
(Luke 1:38) Luke 1:39-45

Talking About Holy Things and Sharing God's Joy

Today is the Fourth and final Sunday of Advent. Our last week in “[preparing] the way of the Lord” during this holy season.¹ Since Christmas can fall on any day of the week, we get a varying number of days of preparation each Advent. My first year as a priest, for example, Christmas was on Monday—so the Fourth Week of Advent lasted for less than a day. This year, we are blessed with almost a full week of preparing for Christmas. The gift of time and extra days is *always* a precious gift from the Lord—so let’s make good use of this gift this week!

Reminder of some ways to help you prepare the way of the Lord: we have Daily Mass every morning at 9:00 a.m., as well as a Candlelight Mass on Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. Confession is always a good way to prepare the way of the Lord. This week we’ll have them before the Mass on Wednesday evening at 6:00-6:40 p.m. And, if there are more people, I will stay after Mass that night. Also, Friday morning at 8:00-8:40 a.m.

+++

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, as we are so close to celebrating the Birth of Jesus, it’s fitting that we heard in the Gospel about an event that happened in the time just before His Birth. A meeting between His Mother, Mary, and her cousin, Elizabeth. And, since they were both with child, Jesus and His cousin, John the Baptist, were present for this historic meeting, as well.

This meeting is known as The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It’s the second of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, and is depicted frequently in artwork. This meeting occurred

just after Mary had been visited by the Angel Gabriel, and had given her “Yes” to God’s plan for her to become the Mother of our Savior, Jesus.²

After learning from the Angel that her cousin, Elizabeth, was also expecting a child, Mary went in haste to be with her.³ The Visitation, therefore, serves as an expression of Mary’s desire to share the gift of joy with Elizabeth. Last Sunday, on Gaudete Sunday, I preached that joy is not something that can be kept to oneself. It’s something that must be shared. Talked about. Discussed. Remembered and held onto. I think we all know what that feeling is like. When something joyful happens, we can’t wait to share the good news with others. There might be a loved one that we think of immediately—*I have to call that person right away to tell him or her the good news!*

This desire we have to share good news and joy with a loved one is a quality of being a disciple of Jesus. As the first disciple, Mary exemplifies this for us in the Visitation. Once we have received Jesus, like Mary, we are called to have zeal for sharing Him and His joy with others!

Elizabeth also models discipleship for us. Like Elizabeth, we are called to recognize Jesus in our neighbors. To joyfully receive others as we would receive Jesus.⁴ Whenever we pray and meditate on today’s Gospel, or on the Second Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, we are encouraged to pray for an increase in the fruit of love of neighbor, hospitality, and zeal for sharing joy and good news.

+++

The Gospel account of the Visitation gives us some pretty good details for what the first moments of their meeting was like. But, we also learn that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months.⁵ What was the rest of their time together like? What kinds of things did they discuss?

Surely, Mary would have been helping Elizabeth in those last three months before giving birth to John. There would've been many household items to take care of. Walks around the neighborhood. Perhaps recalling memories of their family. Making new memories together. Very likely, talking more about what it was like for each of their households to have received a visit from the Angel Gabriel.⁶

A lot of their visit together we can identify with, and have probably done ourselves during visits with family and friends. But, perhaps there are parts of it that we wouldn't be as easily able to identify with. Most of us have not had a visit from an angel like Mary and Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, did. And, it's not always easy for us to feel comfortable talking with others about something so deep and personal as our faith, or times that we've experienced God's presence in some profound way. It's easier to talk about sports, movies, news, weather—things that are important, but not quite as personal.

+++

Recently, I received a call to come visit a patient at the hospital. He asked me to come pray with him, offer him Anointing of the Sick, and he also wanted me to bless his rosary. I told him, "Yes, those are all things I can do! I'll be there in about an hour."

When I arrived, I was greeted by him and his good friend who was there to help him during his time of recovery. I also saw his rosary laid out on his tray. Each bead—59 beads in a complete rosary—was about the size of a ping pong ball! And, the crucifix on the end was extra-large to match. It was quite an extraordinary rosary and, in the course of our conversation, I learned that the extra-large rosary he had was a visible sign of his extra-large faith and willingness to share it with others.

During our visit, he told me some things about his life, and about his faith. And also a story about the ways in which the Cross had been so present in his life, which he invited me to share with others sometime. And, I do plan to do that, in a future homily.

But, what I want to share with you today is about the conclusion of my visit with this man, his good friend, and his rosary. After I Anointed him with holy oil, blessed the rosary, and included a sprinkling of holy water, they were very attentive, prayerful, grateful, and quite impressed by all of it. (And, please know that I'm always happy to visit you or a loved one in the hospital, offer Anointing of the Sick, and to offer a blessing to you or a religious item you have—please don't hesitate to ask.)

As I was making my way to the door, they said to me, "Father, thank you for the blessing and the holy water. After you leave, my friend and I are going to be spending some time talking about what we just experienced."

I was very moved by this statement from that man. By their willingness to intentionally discuss holy things with one another. Their conversation wasn't recorded and the specifics of it won't be remembered for all generations, as is the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. But, I have a sense that it was of the same quality of the Visitation. Two good friends sharing Good News and joys with one another. Discussing holy things and God's presence and activity in their life. I'm assuming this is a frequent occurrence between these two good friends.

+++

I always feel so blessed to share these holy moments with people, and walking away, I felt a desire to stay with them. To hear what they were going to say. To learn more from them about their faith and what they saw and experienced during the time of receiving the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, the blessing prayed over the rosary, and the sprinkling with holy water.

But, just knowing that they were going to be discussing it was a blessing for me and a boost to my faith. And, it made me think about my own willingness to discuss holy things, to be aware of God's presence and activity, and to share good news and joy with others.

+++

Later this week, we'll be entering into some of the holiest days during the eight days of the Christmas Octave. I encourage you to pay attention to what the Lord is doing in your heart during these days. As we prepare to welcome Jesus into our world and into our hearts on Christmas, many of us are also preparing for visits with family and friends. These visits will be prime opportunities to be disciples of Jesus to the world. So, be on the lookout for an opportunity to share the Good News and joy with others. It might feel risky or awkward—but, wouldn't it be wonderful to take a step toward the example of Mary and Elizabeth. To take a step toward the example of those two men I met in the hospital. To make holy discussions a part of our relationship with others. And, I wonder how many of our family and friends are waiting for us to make such an opportunity possible?

We can still talk about sports, movies, weather, and news—Mary and Elizabeth certainly talked about many things. But, why not also talk about the Good News? Pray to the Holy Spirit, the Angel Gabriel, and your Guardian Angel. To help you receive the fruits of the Visitation. To bring Jesus and His joy to your family and friends. And to recognize Jesus in your family and friends, and share His joy with them.

This is what Christmas is all about. That is why Jesus Christ came into our world. So that all might hear the Good News. So that all might come to believe that God is with *all* of us—and that He comes to save *all* of us. That's the best most joyful news ever—and it must be shared!

¹ Isaiah 40:3; Luke 3:4

² Luke 1:26-38

³ Luke 1:36-40

⁴ Rule of Benedict 53

⁵ Luke 1:56

⁶ Luke 1:5-25, 26-38