

Love Has No Time to Waste

Fourth Sunday of Advent year C

Luke 1:39-45

During Advent, the season of preparation for Christmas, the First Coming of Jesus, *and* preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus, as you have noticed, we often go back and forth between Mary and John the Baptist, two saints, two holy friends, who, each in their own way, help us to open our hearts in welcome.

Today, in this gospel, which transmits to us the story of the visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, we *really* see hearts open in welcome: the hearts of Mary and Elizabeth

and John the Baptist—a heart mysteriously open even in the womb. Mary travels the rugged hill country.

Why? What is happening?

What would prompt her to do such a thing when she is pregnant and ought to be at home, safely, caring for the child in her womb?

Allow me to quote Saint Ambrose (born in France, died as Bishop of Milan in 397) who reads this story *so* deeply:

**Where could she hurry to except to the hills, filled with God as she was?
The grace of the Holy Spirit does not admit of delays.
And Mary's arrival and the presence of her Son
quickly show their effects:**

*As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting her child leapt in her womb
and she was filled with the Holy Spirit.*

See the careful distinction in the choice of words.

**Elizabeth was the first to hear the voice
but her son John was the first to feel the effects of grace.**

**She heard as one hears in the natural course of things;
he leapt because of the mystery that was there.**

She sensed the coming of Mary, he the coming of the Lord.

The woman knew the woman, the child knew the child.

The women speak of grace

while inside them grace works on their babies.

**And by a double miracle
the women prophesy under the inspiration of their unborn children.
The infant leapt and the mother was filled with the Spirit.
The mother was not filled before her son:
her son was filled with the Holy Spirit and in turn filled his mother.
John leapt and so did Mary's spirit.
John leapt and filled Elizabeth with the Spirit;
but we know that Mary was not filled but her spirit rejoiced.
For the Incomprehensible
was working incomprehensibly within his mother.
Elizabeth had been filled with the Spirit after she conceived,
but Mary before, at the moment the angel had come.
"Blessed are you," said Elizabeth, "who believed".**

We must know, so that Christmas truly be, so that every day be Christmas,
that Mary visits us.

If we allow her, she will be an instrument of the Holy Spirit for us.
The very moment Mary's greeting reached Elizabeth's ears,
both John the Baptist and Elizabeth were filled with the Holy Spirit:
how mysterious and how amazing.
There was absolutely no necessity that things unfold as such.
God simply enjoys making use of Mary.

What are we to do for this to occur?
What are we to do to be visited by Mary
and to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
Take a look at Elizabeth.
Her attitude, her inner disposition is key.
She stands in awe; she stands humbled and moved.
She welcomes with joyful, unconditional love:
**"How does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"**

Such an attitude, such an inner disposition is within reach for us,
for it is a choice.
Mary and Holy Spirit come to visit us, and wish to give us Christ.
The origin and author of such giving, true Christmas giving
is the Holy Spirit.

But, as Saint Maximilian Kolbe
(the Franciscan priest who died in Auschwitz in 1941) says,
**“The Holy Spirit makes our Lady present
wherever and whenever He acts.”** and thus
“The Holy Spirit is present whenever Mary is present.”

‘Tis the season of hearts open in welcome.
If we open our hearts—but slightly, we can be filled with the Holy Spirit,
and we will know intimacy with Mary.
We will then know the joy of God.
Our days, our lives will be marked by awe.
Our hearts will expand,
and we will be instruments of mercy and light.

Christmas is bittersweet for many of us.
But, it can be a season of healing if we say “yes” to this visitation.
Let us say “yes”—even if we are afraid and are unsure what it means.
The Word will be made flesh in us.
We will be temples of the glory of God,
The journey will be challenging until we see God face-to-face,
but there will be a certainty deep within that we are not alone,
and no and no one will take away the happiness that is ours.

O come Wisdom
O come Lord of Might
O come Root of Jesse
O come Key of David
O come radiant Dawn
O come king of the nations
O come, o come Emmanuel