

Fourth Sunday of Advent-C

Lk 1:39-45

Dear Friends,

The season of Advent, like every season of the Church Year, invites us into the great mystery of the Christ event. Advent looks at the coming of Christ both in the completion of the redemptive reality in the Second Coming, and today, recalling the great coming in Christ's birth.

For us to truly understand and accept in faith the Advent message, we need to start with present reality of our world. We need a savior. Our racial, ethnic and religious divisions, the brokenness of our sexuality, the rampant poverty, dehumanizing consumerism, the neglect of the planet and so many other expressions of injustice scream out the need for a savior. Add to this all the personal hurts and hungers and turmoil in our lives and we find ourselves truly ready for the Advent prayer, **Come Lord Jesus!**

Today's encounter between the young pregnant teenager and the older expectant mother set the scene for the definitive intervention of God in our broken human history. These two women are central to the story of the Christ event. The triple blessing of Elizabeth revealed Mary's special role in the coming of the Savior, the blessed fruit of her womb. Mary is blessed among women as the mother and woman of faith. The final blessing recognized the depth of her faith: **"Blessed are you who believed what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.** (Lk 1:45)

Mary's faith made her the first among the disciples. Her **"May it done to me according to your word."** (Lk 1:38) modeled a life that all followers of Christ can emulate. She entrusted herself to the journey with her Son against all logic and common sense. Elizabeth identified these gifts of faith early on with her triple blessing.

If we are to imitate the faith and surrender of Mary, it will not be found in a list of teachings and doctrines. It will be in a person. It will be the event of that person's coming among us. Like Mary, our life experience will be filled with unending questions and situations of confusion and desperation. Yet we must be open to the call to be faithful in our commitment. From the poverty of Bethlehem to the

power and beauty of Cana, to the rejection in Nazareth to the ultimate mystery of Calvary, Mary had no answers. She did, however, have an open and trusting heart. She was, indeed, the true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Advent offers us the challenge that faced Mary: an opportunity to accept the joy of the Lord or to fall into despair and hopelessness. The same challenge awaits us. Faith let Mary understand well a teaching of her Son's Gospel: what seems to be, really is not and what does not seem to be, really is. Jesus demonstrated this truth from his birth as Messiah with the poor shepherds in the insignificant town of Bethlehem to the total abandonment and rejection at Calvary. Mary walked in faith and love every step of the way with him.

Advent's message for us is to embrace the hope and the call of the Christ event in our prayer, **Come, Lord Jesus!**