

## **Advent 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Mary- a Meditation: "The Blessedness of Mary"**

Today's reading help's us for the immediate preparation for the birth of the Savior. But the focus today is the great encounter between two great mothers: Mary and Elizabeth.

After, after giving her Yes to the Lord, Mary goes in haste to serve her cousin Elizabeth in Ein Karim. It is in this exchange where Elizabeth recognises the work of grace in Mary, as well as in John the Baptist, who is in her womb. As she exclaims: "*blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb*". The Holy Spirit came upon Mary just like a dew fall, in a very gentle way, just like it comes upon the Eucharistic species of bread and wine we offer at the altar during Mass, that transforms them into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

This beautiful encounter between Mary and her cousin Elizabeth shows the *attentiveness* that we ought to have, to the working of grace and the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the lives of others. All the waiting and preparation that we do now has one purpose: that is, 'to perceive the presence of the one who is coming'.

Thes days, many of you will have friends and family coming to visit you. Among the many things you need to focus on when you have visitors, if you are still attentive to the works of grace and the holy spirit in our lives and lives of others, you will experience how the 'Christmas mystery' will be unfolding in your lives and around you.

We are getting ready to celebrate the wonder of Christmas. It could be for some people, a hard time dealing with the reality of broken relationships and imperfect families. But the beautiful reality of

Christmas is that God is revealed in and through the YES of an imperfect human family.

As we gather to celebrate one of the highest points of the entire history of biblical salvation, it's worth noting that this climax happens for the first time in and through a human YES. It continues to take place, every time we – you and me- and those we accompany in faith say, 'Yes' to Jesus' presence in our lives.

We also see that these two mothers- both in similarity and contrasts- young and old/ mother of the Word and mother of the voice/ - but both experiencing a unique intervention of God in their lives-, are above all strong women. We see both of them taking decisions, staying close and supporting their husbands: the doubting Joseph and mute Zachariah. They are great model for many wives in saving families in situations of challenges in families.

May our Blessed Mother Mary and Elizabeth, help us to recognize the presence of Grace and Holy Spirit in our lives and in the lives of others, so that our fraternal encounters at home and community become true moments of rejoicing and exultation of the Spirit, the Spirit who is coming in a quiet and gentle way, like dew fall in our lives. Amen.

In our first letter today, prophet Nathan helps king David in finding the right place to build a 'dwelling place' for God. While king David lived a royal life in the royal palace, the 'ark of God' lays in a tent'.

Friends, *God desires to dwell, where the goodness of man overflows.*

Today's gospel tells us that God wanted to dwell in the most blessed womb, *full of goodness, full of grace*: the womb of Mary. It was necessary that the Incarnate Word should begin his human existence in an environment untouched by sin. And because being born without any stain of sin, she is called Immaculate. It's clear from the words Gabriel.

Gabriel addressed Mary, "*Kaire Miriam*". = "Be happy, the most favoured one". In the Gk. original text, it is translated better as, "*who is grace*". We may understand, Luke's intension that God considers Mary as 'grace' to the world. This is what we pray about Mary in the litany, "mother of grace". (Gen.12:2) God tells Abraham, "you will be a blessing". God who made Abraham, the father of faith, 'a blessing', wants to make Mary, the mother of the believers, "a blessing", a grace.

If you want to know what heaven is like, look at Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary, who was conceived without sin and who has obtained the fullness of salvation, is the perfect example, the icon and image of the Church-the new people of God. God fell so much in love with the world that he took 'human flesh' to dwell among us. Mary so much fell in love with God, that she gifted her flesh to the Eternal Word! Look at Jesus and we see something of Mary. It's through her that the *Eternal Word became incarnate Word*.

Mary makes visible, what is invisible, through her response. We know that Light is composed of a spectrum of colors, but the human eye cannot see those colors. Only when a rainbow arches across the sky are the colors perceptible. Like a rainbow, Mary depicts what is normally hidden from view, because she shows us the invisible by making it visible, in all its beauty - the redeemed humanity, in all its purity.

Every Christian is called, not just to do good, but *to do "the will of God"*. We may justifiably argue that whatever we try to do is good or intended towards good. But most often, the good we aim at is the *natural good*, based on our own interests. Instead of just doing whatever is right and good for you, only when you make a sincere effort to do what God wants you to do, like Mary, the word becomes flesh in your life, in your family, in your community. There is no better answer to God's will than Mary's total surrender in her answer-**Fiat**.

Friends, Mary is given to us as a blessing: she continues to be a blessing for all of us, through her total surrender to the word, her -YES-to God's plan for her. For Luke, *discipleship* consists in listening to God's word and then fulfilling it, and Mary does both, to become the most perfect disciple. That is why, soon after receiving the annunciation, she goes urgently to serve Elizebeth, her cousin in need.

Christmas is the ideal time for us to be filled with the spirit of Christ, allowing his rebirth within us. Once Christ is reborn in us, He enables us to share his love with all whom we encounter, by offering them humble service, unconditional forgiveness and compassionate care.

Friends, let us take some time to visit those in need during Christmas season, especially the sick and shut-ins, to bring some inspiration into their lives, and hopefully to bring some joy and get them closer to God. Mary wants *us to be a blessing*, she wants us *to become a*

blessing. Like Mary, who brought Jesus Christ into this world, let us take Jesus to others. Like Mary, let us be *a blessing, blessing to each other, be a 'grace' to all!* Amen.

Mary had to face an enormous challenge to her faith and trust in God and to the faith of her family and Joseph, the man she chose to marry. She was asked to assume a burden of tremendous responsibility. It had never been heard of before that a child could be born without a natural father. Mary was asked to accept this miraculous exception to the laws of nature. That required faith and trust in God and in his promises. Second, Mary was not yet married. Pregnancy outside of wedlock was not tolerated in those days. Public humiliation and stoning to death was the punishment. Mary was only espoused to Joseph, and such an engagement had to last for a whole year. She was asked to take a great risk. She could have been rejected by Joseph, by her family, by all her own people. Mary knew that Joseph and her family would not understand without a special intervention from God. In spite of all risks involved, Mary believed and trusted in God's promises.

Joseph, a just and God-fearing man, did not wish to embarrass or punish his espoused wife Mary, when he discovered that she was pregnant. To all appearances she had broken their solemn pledge to be faithful and chaste to one another. *Joseph, no doubt took this troubling matter to God in prayer.* He was not hasty to judge or to react with hurt and anger. God rewarded him not only with guidance and consolation, but with the divine assurance that he had indeed called Joseph to be the husband of Mary and to assume a mission that would require the utmost trust in Almighty God, and Joseph believed in the divine message.

Like Mary, Joseph is a model of faith for us. He is a faithful witness and servant of God's unfolding plan of redemption. Are you ready to believe in the promises of God, even when faced with perplexing circumstances and what seems like insurmountable problems? Let us celebrate Christmas, the feast of the Incarnation, with joyful hearts and let us renew our faith and hope in God and in his redeeming work